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COUGAR PROWLS

TASK GROUP HEADS EAST

Leading the nation's flagship, HMS Sutherland escorts HMS Albion through the Suez Canal to begin the second half of the Navy's headline deployment of 2011. Royal Navy Photographer of the Year LA(Phot) Keith Morgan climbed into the crow's nest of the frigate to capture this impressive shot looking astern. *See the centre pages*.

BAPTISM OF FIRE

OCEAN'S GUNSHIPS STRIKE AT GADDAFI

AFGHAN SURGE

COMMANDOS DRIVE OUT TALEBAN

GLOBAL REACH



Satellite imagery courtesy of NASA

Fleet Focus

IT IS now high summer (we looked at the calendar to make sure...) and two operations continue to dominate the headlines – Afghanistan and Libya.

But despite the heavy Royal Navy and Royal Marines involvement in both, a glance at the map above show they are far from the 'only games in town'.

The enduring mission east of Suez continues with more than a dozen warships, submarines and auxiliaries committed on a mix of counter-piracy/counter-terrorism patrols (**HM Ships Monmouth** and **Iron Duke,** submarine **Turbulent** – *see page 5 for the latter*), mine warfare exercises (*inter alia* **Middleton** – *see page 25*), concerted survey operations (**Enterprise** and **Echo** – *see page 9*).

One long-term Gulf mission is finally over, instructing Iraq's sailors and marines; the team with the **Iraqi Training and Advisory Mission** at Umm Qasr provide an overview of their achievements – *see page 8*.

The clutch of vessels in the Middle East has now been joined by Britain's flagship **HMS Albion**, her escort **HMS Sutherland** and tanker **RFA Wave Knight** as the Cougar 11 deployment resumes (*see centre pages*).

Not accompanying the task group, however, is **HMS Ocean** which was ordered to Libya to support the NATO mission. Her Army Air Corps Apache gunships have been in action against Government forces by land and sea (*see centre pages*).

Elsewhere in the Gulf of Sirte, **HMS Brocklesby** has completed her duties keeping the sea lanes to Misrata open with **HMS Bangor** taking her place; **HMS Triumph** has completed her second tour of duty off Libya by launching yet more cruise missiles at land targets; and **HMS Liverpool** has finally been allowed a brief break from patrolling off the coast with a few days off in Malta (*see pages 6-7*).

HMS Richmond has been working with Commonwealth forces off the Malay peninsula on a major exercise (*see page 33*).

Concerted efforts by **3 Commando Brigade** in Afghanistan have helped to reclaim districts from insurgents, allowing the first tentative shoots of recovery to appear (*see pages 14-16*). Sadly, the efforts have not been without sacrifice for **42 Commando** which lost three of its number (*see page 4*).

HMS Clyde and **HMS Bulwark** have both paid tribute to the dead of the Falklands conflict (*see page 36*), while in warmer waters **HMS Sutherland** represented the Senior Service at commemorations honouring the dead of the ill-fated Balkan and Cretan campaigns of 1941 (*see page 4*).

In home waters, there's the welcome sight of **HMS Illustrious** back at sea (*see opposite*) and **HMS Trenchant** being rededicated (*see right*).

Lusty was refitted just a few yards from the dry dock where **HMS Queen Elizabeth** and **Prince of Wales** will be constructed; we take a look at progress on the two future carriers (*see pages 30-31*) as well as one of their escorts, **HMS Dragon** whose trials are almost completed (*see pages 22-23*).

A demonstration of the potency of carrier strike was provided by the USS George H W Bush, the Americans' newest flat-top which exercised with **HMS Dauntless**, **Westminster**, **Gloucester** and **Torbay** on Saxon Warrior, a huge war game played out in the Western Approaches. On the back of the exercise, the heads of the Royal Navy and US Navy pledged their enduring support for each other as 'No.1 allies' (*see page 24*).

We spent a day with **HMS Gannet**, Britain's busiest Search and Rescue unit (*see pages 20-21*).

And talking of rescues, a massive exercise to pluck submariners from stricken boats was played out off Spain. Among the participants was the Faslane-based **NATO Submarine Rescue System** (*see pages 18-19*).



Special guest tsar

EAST meets West as one sleek grey messenger of death (HMS Dauntless in the foreground), joins up with another, rather darker grey messenger of death (Russia's RNS Admiral Chabanenko) bound for the world's largest naval base: Norfolk, Virginia.

The two destroyers form two thirds of the foreign contingent taking part in the annual FRUKUS war games – involving France, Russia, the UK and US (hence the acronym) – running from late June into early July.

The four participating nations take it in turns to host the exercise; this year the honour falls to the US Navy and its home on the Eastern Seaboard.

Portsmouth-based Dauntless headed across the Atlantic fresh from working with the Americans' newest carrier, the USS George H W Bush in the Western Approaches (*see page 24*).

On the way the £1bn Type 45 destroyer spent a week in company with the Chabanenko from Russia's Northern Fleet, carrying out various manoeuvres and exchanging personnel for tours – a Royal Naval interpreter was embarked on Dauntless to break through the language barrier.

The two destroyers also sent their helicopters aloft (two Mk8 Lynx – the first time a pair of the nimble helicopters have embarked on a Type 45 – from Dauntless, a Helix from the Chabanenko).

All helped, said Dauntless' CO Capt Richard Powell, to smooth the way for working together during the exercise proper.

The Americans put six months of planning into the two weeks of FRUKUS which involved the USS Harry S Truman carrier battle group, a squadron of US destroyers, and the French frigate Ventose in addition to Dauntless and the Chabanenko. The whole exercise was being directed by an international task group staff from shore.

Once FRUKUS is completed, Dauntless will move on to carry out hot weather trials – particularly pertinent as the first Type 45 is due to deploy east of Suez in the near future.

The ship has already carried out cold weather tests – to see how the ship, equipment and ship's company cope with severe sub-zero temperatures – off Tromsø in northern Norway earlier this year but, frustratingly, it was relatively mild.

Trenchant's 'potent presence'

BACK – and almost ready for action – after a two-year revamp is HMS Trenchant, ceremonially welcomed into the Fleet.

Beneath a clear sky and blazing sun the submarine invited 200 family and friends to Devonport to mark the vessel's rededication after an extended revamp.

The hunter-killer boat entered the Devonport submarine refit complex at the end of 2009 and after many months of hard work by Royal Navy technicians and engineers from Babcock Marine Trenchant had emerged with numerous improvements, not least among them a more capable sonar suite and Tomahawk cruise missile system.

Trenchant's Commanding Officer Cdr Irvine Lindsay addressed his smartly-turned-out ship's company on the parade ground, praising them as the "finest" in the Royal Navy.

He also thanked his crew's families for their support back home, giving sailors the reassurance to concentrate on being as effective as possible away at sea.

"It is a testament to the commitment of the crew and their families and of the support and service of the local workforce that HMS Trenchant returns to the Royal Navy's Fleet a more capable and deadly vessel than ever," said Cdr Lindsay.

"She is packed with the latest equipment and weaponry and will be a potent presence worldwide for many years to come and whilst the hardware is impressive it is the ship's company who are the key component in HMS Trenchant. It is an absolute honour to be in command of such a fine body of men."

The boat's sponsor, Lady Meriel Hunt, was guest of honour at the rededication ceremony; she launched the boat back in 1989 and has followed Trenchant's progress keenly since.

Families of the submariners were joined by representatives of various organisations from their affiliated town, Llanelli.

Trenchant is now undergoing a period of trials and training.



She's back

HERE'S a sight to warm the cockles of a British heart, to half-quote Winston Churchill.

This is HMS Illustrious, Britain's last aircraft carrier – for now – back where she belongs, at sea.

After £40m work carried out over the past 16 months, tugs helped Lusty to negotiate the challenging waters of the Forth as the carrier set off down the long road to front-line service which will take her to the end of her life in 2014.

Illustrious left Rosyth on June 20 for an extensive series of trials in UK waters before returning to her natural home in Portsmouth.

She is, says her Commanding Officer Capt Jerry Kyd, "raring to go" – as are her 600-strong ship's company who are "ready to take this great ship through her trials, and then home to Portsmouth where we will prepare for her exciting future role.

"Sailing from Rosyth for the last time is an historic day for us. We are in top condition for the challenges ahead thanks to the hard work of my sailors, plus the successful partnership we've had with industry."

Since arriving on the Forth at the beginning of last year, Illustrious has seen her communications kit enhanced, mess areas – the crew's living spaces – revamped, a new anti-torpedo system fitted, and has had 540,000 litres of paint (enough to fill one fifth of an Olympic-sized swimming pool) applied, including a fuel-efficient coating to her outer hull which will make her scythe through the oceans more efficiently, among other work carried out by Babcock and the ship's company.

Above all, however, the ship emerges from refit capable of carrying up to 20 helicopters and 600 troops as an assault ship (a function she performed for real during operations in Afghanistan in 2001-02).

Illustrious was, of course, due to leave Rosyth originally to resume her duties as a Harrier carrier, but last year's Defence Review put paid to that – and meant a few changes had to be made to the refit programme.

Instead of launching the late-lamented jump jets, Lusty will serve as the nation's on-call helicopter carrier when HMS Ocean goes into refit,

"This has been a challenging project, delivered to a very high standard by the joint team – on time and on budget," said Capt Graeme Little, of the Capital Ships team at the Defence Equipment and Support organisation.

"We approach Illustrious' return to the navy with confidence in the significant improvements which have been made."

After an initial week-long run out of Rosyth early last month, a more thorough five-week workout for Lusty is now under way. She's due in Portsmouth in late July, when she'll be formally handed back to the Fleet.

Picture: LA(Phot) Ben Sutton, FRPU North

‘Very humbling places to visit’

UNDER the piercing eastern Mediterranean sun, sailors from HMS Sutherland march on the colours at commemorations honouring the dead of the short – but brutal – struggle for Crete 70 years ago.

The ten-day battle for the island was among the most ferocious fought in World War 2 – and claimed a particularly heavy toll of the Royal Navy.

The Mediterranean Fleet was stretched to breaking point in its efforts trying to stop the Germans using the sea lanes from the Greek mainland to reinforce their paratroopers already landed.

Those efforts by the Royal Navy were largely successful – but the Luftwaffe sank or badly damaged 30 warships at a cost of more than 2,200 lives.

The battle on land went no better for Commonwealth troops who were forced to abandon Crete after a week’s fighting; more than 16,000 were evacuated to Egypt by the RN in a hurried ‘mini Dunkirk’.

Seven decades on and a dwindling band of brothers from the UK, Australia and New Zealand – almost all in their 90s and one aged 102 – gathered at the Commonwealth War Graves Commission cemetery overlooking Souda Bay.

They were joined by sailors from the Devonport-based frigate, plus the Duke of Gloucester and Commander in Chief Fleet Admiral Sir Trevor Soar, leading the UK contingent honouring the dead of 1941.

From her berth not far from the cemetery, the Fighting Clan fired a 21-gun salute, which echoed around the bay.

With the ceremonies over, veterans were invited aboard Sutherland – for many it was their first visit to a Royal Navy warship since that fateful evacuation in 1941.

“For the ship’s company the greatest sense of achievement came from the interaction they were able to have with the veterans themselves – they are genuinely remarkable people with truly incredible stories to tell,” said Lt Cdr Paul O’Shaughnessy.

“Their stories of hand-to-hand battles in the village squares and the warmth and hospitality of the Cretan people in their time of need, really brought out the contrasts of that period.

“The sheer numbers of servicemen who lost their lives on both sides is simply immense and the immaculately-presented cemeteries are very humbling places to visit.”

Upon leaving Souda Bay, Sutherland sailed for Kalamata in Greece for more 1941 commemorations; a month before the battle for Crete, the Royal and Merchant Navies were charged with pulling Allied troops out of Greece following the Germans’ lunge into the Balkans.

The entry to the Peloponnesian port was “somewhat challenging due to the tight confines of the harbour”, but once alongside the Type 23 rather dominated the harbour front. “At least the town could see that the Royal Navy had arrived,” said Lt Cdr O’Shaughnessy.

Once again the Fighting Clan had the honour of supplying a guard for the commemorations held at the town’s war memorial.

Other highlights of the visit to Greece were a display by the Red Arrows, which was witnessed by the entire ship’s company from a nearby beach, and the chance to meet yet more veterans.

Upon sailing from Kalamata, a short memorial service and wreathlaying ceremony was conducted at sunset to remember the men lost during the evacuations 70 years ago.

⚓ Letters, page 28

Picture: LA(Phot) Keith Morgan, RNPOTY

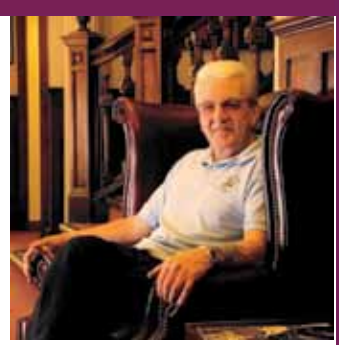


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Menofrarequality

IT HAS been a dark month for the men of 42 Commando who have lost three comrades in Afghanistan, including a Military Cross winner.

Mne Sam Alexander, who was decorated for bravery on his previous tour of duty in Helmand, was killed by a homemade bomb during a concerted push to drive insurgents out of the Loy Mandeh district.

Killed at his side was the junior officer leading the patrol, Lt Oliver Augustin.

In a separate incident, L/Cpl Martin Gill was killed by small arms fire during a patrol of the Adensee district of Nahr-e Saraj (South).



● *Family man Mne Sam Alexander MC ‘the bravest of the brave’*



● *Lt Ollie Augustin ‘inspirational, passionate and selfless’*



● *L/Cpl Martin Gill ‘a Marine of rare quality’*

Mne Sam Alexander, born in London in 1982, received the Military Cross for charging at insurgents with a heavy machine-gun and, when it ran out of ammunition, emptied his 9mm pistol, to save a wounded comrade.

He had joined the Corps in 2006 and served his first tour of duty in Afghanistan with Kilo Company 42 Cdo on Operation Herrick 9. On his return he trained as a ‘tankie’ – a heavy weapons specialist – and joined the ‘Jesters’ of Juliet Coy, deploying with them to Helmand this spring.

He leaves a widow, Claire, and a son Leo, born in July last year.

“Sam was so special. He was the gentlest of men but tough when he needed to be. He risked his safety for his friends but never batted an eyelid. It was his job and a job he did well. Sam was a loving husband and a wonderful father. He was our rock and my best friend. He has been taken from me all too soon,” said his widow.

“We both love him and will miss him very much. These are all special guys who, for whatever reason, join a very tough band of blokes who willingly die for each other without a second thought. I just hope his death was not in vain”

Lt Col Ewen Murchison, 42 Cdo’s Commanding Officer said the loss of Mne Alexander was “shocking news” for his close band of brothers.

“He was a larger than life character and leaves a gap that cannot be filled. He inspired those around him to reach the highest possible standards and in doing so was an exemplary role model for those younger and less experienced than himself.

“He led by example and from the front and would have unquestionably had a promising future in the Royal Marines ahead of him. Sadly this will not be realised as his life has been tragically cut short. Instead, Mne Alexander now joins the legends, the bravest of the brave, who inspire us all forever with their courage, dedication and sacrifice; his memory will endure.”

Capt Rob Garside, Juliet Coy’s intelligence officer, said the MC winner was an inspirational figure to junior green berets and “a bootneck that everyone would want to be by his side in a firefight”.

His words are echoed by his comrades.

“Sam was an exceptional soldier with the heart of a lion,” said Mne Owen Blake, Recce Troop, 42 Cdo. He witnessed the deed which earned Mne Alexander his MC.

“During leave and over a few ‘wets’ Sam casually played down his award, stating he was only doing his job; in the years since he has never showed off or acted on his award.

“This sums Sam up to a ‘T’, a modest man and exceptional soldier and a bootneck that many aspire to emulate. He will be truly missed.”

Born in Kent in 1988, **Lt Oliver Augustin** travelled the world upon leaving school, volunteering at a school in Kenya and working his way through Africa and Australasia.

When he returned he resumed his studies before applying to join the Corps, completing officer training in December last year.

He was immediately appointed to command the Fire Support Group of Juliet Company, 42 Cdo, where his men knew him simply as ‘The Boss’.

He leaves behind his father Sean, his mother Jane and his sister Sarah.

“His warmth and humour lit a room and infected all around him. He dealt with people in a thoughtful and compassionate way,” said his parents.

“His independence and sense of adventure meant that he embraced life and his chosen path.

“Ollie we will all love and miss you forever.”

Lt Augustin was, said Lt Col Murchison, “a charismatic young man, with a keen sense of humour, he was the life and soul of any gathering and he touched all those who had dealings with him.

“As a leader he was inspirational, passionate and selfless, putting the welfare of his men above all else - they adored him and looked to him for direction, but looked on him as a brother in arms.

“As a Marine he was utterly professional, dependable and tactically astute. At the time his life was tragically cut short he was characteristically leading from the front, taking the fight to the enemy; his audacity, commitment and courage clear for all to see.”

Lt Lloyd Fallesen, Officer Commanding 1 Troop, Juliet Coy, said the young officer was “a one-in-a-million friend. Ollie was someone you could count on regardless of the circumstances. This also earned him the respect of his men, a job which he not only loved, but lived and breathed.”

Mne Michael Chapman of Fire Support Group, Juliet Coy added: “He was easily the best all-round boss I have ever worked with. What a great bloke,.

“He could easily be classed as one of the lads from his constant funnies, positive attitude and ‘dit’ spinning. He really knew how the lads worked and had an endless amount of patience with every single person in the troop.

“He was a hands-on boss who hated the computer but loved the adrenalin rush. He will be missed throughout the Corps.”

L/Cpl Martin Gill was carrying out a patrol to meet the locals and disrupt insurgent activty when he was fatally wounded by small arms fire from a compound.

Born in 1988, the 22-year-old grew up in Nottingham and joined the Marines in 2008.

After earning his green beret he was assigned to Fleet Protection Group in Faslane protecting Britain’s nuclear deterrent.

Known as ‘Fish’ by his mates thanks to his prowess in the pool with 42’s swimming team, L/Cpl Gill joined Kilo Coy – the Black Knights – last September as second in command of a section, which in reality frequently meant he served as section commander.

L/Cpl Gill was, said Lt Col Murchison, “a Marine of rare quality”.

He continued: “His friends described him as ‘morale in a box’. Only a week before his death, he made an Afghanistan Monopoly board to keep his colleagues entertained; he was quick-witted and a constant source of banter.

“A true hero, he died taking the fight to the enemy in the finest traditions of the Royal Marines: selfless, resolute, and courageous to the end.”

C/Sgt Scott Ferguson, Kilo Coy’s quartermaster, said ‘Fish’ was a constant source of morale “willing others to smile with his cheeky grin.

“The butt of many a joke and maker of more, he maintained a type of morale that hopefully we can sustain throughout the remainder of our tour.”

Mne Andrew Ross of Kilo Coy added: “He was always happy and always put on a positive outlook on the situation no matter how great the odds were against him.

“He was the silver lining, with the cheeky grin no matter how big the storm.

“He was a ‘live for the moment’ kind of guy, telling me a story once about how he was meant to go and buy a house and ended up with a new car, as you do. Martin was a good friend and will be greatly missed by everybody who knew him.”

‘We are well ahead of schedule...’

THE efforts by the Royal Marines to bring peace and stability to Afghanistan have been praised by the Defence Secretary and First Sea Lord on a visit to Helmand.

Dr Liam Fox and Admiral Sir Mark Stanhope – plus his Army counterpart, Chief of the General Staff General Sir Peter Wall – spent two days in the Lashkar Gah area to see the progress made on the ground by British forces.

In particular, they witnessed the training being delivered by British personnel to thousands of Afghan soldiers and policemen, ahead of the first phase of the transition of authority to local forces later in the summer.

The VIPs visited the UK’s hub of operations at Camp Bastion, plus nearby Lashkar Gah and smaller, more remote Forward Operating Bases and Patrol Bases.

As well as seeing training in action, Dr Fox and the military chiefs had the opportunity to speak with members of the Afghan forces and their senior officers about their increasing capability and confidence as they prepare for a future with themselves in the security lead.

“I found what I saw on my visit to be extremely encouraging. We are well ahead of schedule for training up our target numbers of Afghan soldiers and police by the end of the year and, thanks to the outstanding mentoring being provided by British Armed Forces, the quality is improving all the time,” said Dr Fox.

“Of course, transition does not mean an early exit or early drawdown of UK forces. As Afghan capacity grows, the role of British and other international troops will evolve, moving from principally combat to training and support roles.

“But all the evidence on the ground suggests that by 2015 we will be in a position to conclude our combat mission.”

He and Admiral Stanhope and General Wall watched a security demonstration by Afghan Local Police – a volunteer part-time force who complement the Afghan Nation Police – and are currently being trained by green berets of 45 Commando plus the Royal Military Police.

The Defence Secretary also received detailed briefings on recent operations and progress of the overall campaign from the Commander of Task Force Helmand, 3 Cdo Bde’s Commanding Officer Brigadier Ed Davis, other headquarters staff and Battle Group commanders.

Admiral Stanhope took the opportunity of the visit to meet Royal Marines from 42 Commando based at Patrol Base Wahid, where he thanked the men for their recent efforts to clear former insurgent strongholds of the baleful influence of the Taleban.

“I am extremely proud of the contribution that Royal Marines have made to the improved security situation in central Helmand. They have made a great deal of sacrifice yet remain resolute and determined to continue their work to develop the ANA and ANP to enable them to take over security,” he added.

Before leaving Helmand, the party met members of Joint Force Support Afghanistan, the team responsible for the UK’s Camp Bastion.

They visited the base’s hospital and spent time with injured service personnel, and thanked medical staff who work around the clock to treat those wounded in action.

⚓ Operations in Afghanistan, pages 14-16

Lynx flies the Atlantic

THERE, that grabbed your attention.

Admittedly, it was in the back of a C17 transporter. Had it tried to make it on its own, the little helicopter would have run out of fuel about 120 miles off Land's End…

The Mk8 from 815 Naval Air Squadron spent 11 hours in the back of the giant Boeing jet before being offloaded at NAS Mayport in Florida ready for a seven-month deployment.

The Yeovilton-based helicopter will spend the summer and autumn in the Caribbean using tanker RFA Wave Ruler as her launchpad.

There she's taking the fight to drug-runners and will also be on hand, as will the tanker's ship's company, should natural disaster strike the many islands in the region during hurricane season.

A 12-man team – including two Royal Marine snipers, aircrew, maintainers and controller – has deployed with the helicopter to form 206 Flight.

Once embarked on the fleet tanker, the first task was to get through Directed Continuation Training provided by a mobile FOST team who travel the globe to ensure ships on deployment are ready for any eventuality.

As well as the standard fire and flood exercises, the Rulers were tested on their ability to cope with a natural disaster, with the US naval air station providing the disaster zone.

The Lynx was used extensively to transfer personnel from ship to shore, carry out aerial surveys and carry stores and medical supplies, slung beneath the fuselage.

"It was a demanding and challenging exercise, but it also highlights the essential support that the RN, RFA and Fleet Air Arm can provide to hurricane-stricken communities," said pilot Lt Adam Rudkin.

206 Flight's home for the next seven months is deployed as Britain's Atlantic Patrol Ship (North) with a dual role to support the international effort to prevent drugs reaching US and Europe from Central and South America and to provide assistance in the event of storms wreaking devastation.

RFA Wave Ruler has a full medical team and sick bay, carries 2,000 emergency relief supply packages and can provide around 100 tonnes of fresh water every day should it be required by a community.

Turbulent times

YOU'LL have to take our word for it: this is a submariner.



No traditional woolly pully, no pair of Zeiss slung around his neck.

But then it is a tad warm at this time of year east of Suez…

Well protected from the scorching Middle East sun one of HMS Turbulent's officers of the watch keeps a lookout on the fin as the Devonport-based boat knuckles down to the crux of a ten-month deployment.

Yes, you read that correctly. Ten months. Like her recently-returned sister Tireless, Turbs is on an extended tour of duty in the Indian Ocean.

The Trafalgar-class boat is Britain's 'duty TLAM shooter' (the official classification is SSN(T)) in the region – providing the round-the-clock ability to Allied forces in the region to launch Tomahawk cruise missiles, if needed, on instructions from headquarters back in Northwood.

That's not the first involvement with the land-attack missiles on this deployment; upon leaving Devonport, Turbs made best speed for the Gulf of Sirte and the mission off Libya.

Unlike HMS Triumph whom she replaced – by whom, in turn, she was subsequently relieved after a quick turnaround in Devonport – Turbulent wasn't called upon to launch cruise missiles at government targets in Libya.

And so to Suez, and while some of the crew sweated on the fin and casing providing protection while the boat transited the canal… other crew sweated below on the Row the Suez challenge.

It took the nuclear-powered submarine one minute short of 12 hours to cover the 161 kilometres (100 miles) of the canal.

It took a bunch of sweaty, muscly submariners a mere 10h 46m. They also raised more than £3k for Children's Hospice South West and its £5m appeal to build a respite home for youngsters and their families in St Austell.

It'll be the year's end before there's another chance to compete in the rowing challenge.

In the intervening six months, the boat's on call to fire her main armament, as well as conduct a myriad of other East of Suez duties – chiefly working with Allied military forces and gathering intelligence.

First, however, you have to get through the Bab-el-Mandeb – the narrow waters separating Asia from Africa.

It is one of the oceans' great choke points – and posed a challenge to Team Turbulent who had to negotiate the boat through the 12-mile-wide stretch of sea amid a flurry of fishing vessels and merchantmen.

The first link-up with friendly forces came in the Gulf of Aden when the submarine rendezvoused with RFA Argus and the Merlin helicopters of 820 Naval Air Squadron to give some of the novice airmen some anti-submarine warfare training.

All of which you'll be able to watch on the telly later this year.

The boat has a documentary team embarked – they've been onboard since Turbulent conducted her pre-deployment training back in January.

Submariner: The Series promises 'never-before-seen footage' of a British submarine on a covert patrol and is due to air on Channel 5 in the autumn.

So, if you've never experienced it for real, you'll be able to watch a T-boat sailing into its 'second home': Fujairah.

The emirate has become the principal port of call for British submarines operating in the region.

Armed rigid inflatable boats from the US Navy's Maritime Expeditionary Boat Division (102) escorted Turbulent into Fujairah harbour, where the boat moored alongside RFA Diligence, serving as a depot/support ship.

The boat hosted the Diligence team for drinks… and Dili reciprocated with lunch; the two ships – and ship's companies– will become firm friends over the coming six months.

"The visit to Fujairah came as a welcome chance to charge the batteries, take on further stores and conduct planning for the next stage of operations on the deployment," said CO Cdr Ryan Ramsey, some of whose crew hadn't enjoyed any leave since the boat began her pre-deployment training.

Turbs is now back at sea (she's already steamed the equivalent of more than half-way around the globe since leaving home) carrying out more anti-submarine exercises with the US, Royal Australian and Royal Navies.

The boat's due to return to Devonport in December and will decommission the following month, bringing to an end a career spanning 29 years, during which, says Cdr Ramsey, "Turbulent has conducted covert operations all over the world and in doing so made a huge contribution to the defence of the United Kingdom.

"For now though, she remains troublesome to her enemies. *Turbulent hostibus fiat*."

Gannetflyin springstorm

RESCUERS from HMS Gannet fought against 70-knot winds to airlift five people to safety as storms lashed Scotland.

The Sea King crew from Britain's busiest helicopter search and rescue unit were scrambled first to Rothesay on the Isle of Bute to pick up someone with an ankle injury who needed treatment at hospital in Paisley.

The sortie gave the rescuers their first taste of the very turbulent and tricky conditions which would hamper their work for the rest of the day.

Having returned to base, the team was almost immediately scrambled again, this time to reports of a casualty with leg injuries on the Isle of Gigha on the western side of the Mull of Kintyre – again with the request to transfer the patient to Paisley.

The flight to the Hebridean island was hindered by a 70-knot headwind, with the helicopter only able to make around 25-30 knots – 35mph – over the ground (the Sea King's top speed is 125kts – 143mph).

Still *en route* for Gigha, the helicopter was re-assigned to help the 50ft yacht Silver Duet in Ardminish Bay – also at Gigha, but on the east side of the island – where a yachtsman had sustained an injury to his arm which was suspected to be broken.

Winchman Sgt Lee Haggerty RM was lowered down on 80ft of cable to pick up both sailors.

The fourth and final call was to look for someone seen in the waters of Loch Striven near Bute.

That search was soon called off; the 'person in the water' was more likely to have been a dolphin, so the helicopter returned to base after an almost continuous four-and-a-half-hour mission.

Gannet feature, pages 20-21

'Theverybestofships…'

WITH her long, slender decommissioning pennant billowing furiously in windy weather, HMS Gloucester makes her way into Portsmouth Harbour for the final time.

The destroyer, veteran of the first Gulf War and the Lebanon evacuation among other deeds, entered the naval base for the last time under her own steam.

Her passing, to make way for the next-generation Type 45s, leaves just three of the old breed of Type 42 destroyers – Liverpool, Edinburgh and York – in service with the Fleet.

The Fighting G has sailed just short of 800,000 miles since her commissioning in 1985 and is the only warship to destroy an enemy missile in flight; her Sea Darts downed an Iraqi Silkworm missile fired by Saddam Hussein's forces at the battleship USS Missouri.

And at the end of her active life, Gloucester found herself protecting an American leviathan once more.

Her last duty was to take part in Exercise Saxon Warrior off the South-West coast, one of the largest war games hosted by the UK in some time (*see page 24*).

With her last duty performed, the Fighting G made for Portsmouth in choppy seas and was welcomed into harbour by tugs blasting jets of water in appreciation of 26 years' service.

"I cannot express how proud I am of the ship," said Cdr David George, the destroyer's final Commanding Officer. "She's come in for the last time having given the cream of the US Navy a run for their money in one of the biggest exercises off the South Coast for years.

"It was a very emotional final entry for the very best of ships – but she's 29 years old and with more than 750,000 miles under her belt, there are more capable Type 45 destroyers now taking the stage and Gloucester's time has come to bow out with dignity."

Picture: LA(Phot) Jason Ballard, FRPU East





GLOBAL REACH







● *Home in Triumph... (Left) The Jolly Roger flies from HMS Triumph – you can just make it out behind the pilot a Malta; one of Brocklesby's gun crew stares at the Misrata breakwater; black plumes of smoke drift from a blazi*

Pictures: Lt

Thus alway

ELEVEN weeks after it was last hoisted, the Jolly Roger – the submariner's traditional battle ensign – flies once more on HMS Triumph.

Briefly billowing in the rain on an unseasonably damp and chilly June day in Devon, the flag – freshly adorned with small white Tomahawks – signifies once again that the Trafalgar-class nuclear submarine played a key role off Libya.

It was almost a carbon copy homecoming for the hunter-killer submarine which sailed back into Devonport after her second tour of duty in the Gulf of Sirte: Commanding Officer Cdr Rob Dunn on the fin in his trademark submariner's jumper, overcast skies, lots of deeps on the casing also in white woollen jerseys (well, they're white when issued…).

On her second spell on Operation Unified Protector, the NATO mission enforcing UN resolutions in support of the pro-democracy peoples of Libya, Triumph once again struck at Col Gaddafi's military machine.

She fired a number of cruise missiles at government targets – including facilities used by the regime's secret police near Tripoli.

"I'm very proud of my team's work, from the engineers who kept the boat working in top operational order to the chefs and logistics team who enabled us to stay on station for so long," said Cdr Dunn.

"We have been able to make a difference to the campaign by exploiting Triumph's strengths which are inherent stealth combined with a state-of-the-art combat system and a well-trained and motivated crew to operate it."

Triumph's crew are now enjoying some leave while the submarine herself receives some TLC in the form of a maintenance period in her home port before becoming the training boat for prospective submarine commanders on the legendary Perisher course.

Triumph's not the only Royal Navy warship to complete her time off the shores of Libya.

After three months ensuring the people of Misrata received humanitarian aid by keeping their port open, **HMS Brocklesby** is homeward bound.

The minehunter made headlines around the world at the end of April when she blew up one mine laid by pro-Government forces, then swept the sea lane into Misrata to allow the aid ship Red Star I to sail in and deliver her cargo.

"It was good clearing the mine – and it is special being part of the crew which did that," said mine warfare specialist AB 'Mac' McGuinness.

That was the highlight of the ship's mission – but far from the end of it. Since those dramatic few hours, Brocklesby's continued to play a crucial role as part of Unified Protector, maintaining a constant mine countermeasures presence in the sea off Misrata, keeping the waters mine-free to ensure that Libyan citizens can receive the help they desperately need.

"The threat of mines and water-borne improvised explosive devices is still high – despite NATO attacks on Libyan naval units in early June," explained navigator Lt Joel Roberts.

"Mines can be laid by fishing vessels, and as Misrata is a working port, there are plenty of small and large ships transiting through the approaches – so the area needs continuous surveying and assurance that humanitarian aid can safely enter and exit the port.

"With the Dutch ship Haarlem and Belgian Narcis we've spent the past month patrolling and hunting along the Misrata coastline, sometimes going in so close to the shore itself that you can see the small Libyan rebel flags fluttering on the cars driving up and down the coastal road and flying from the breakwaters entering the harbour."

And be in no doubt about it: the 40-plus sailors aboard the small warship have been very much in harm's way.

"Every now and again the shockwaves of heavy artillery and shells landing in the city can be felt throughout the ship even over two miles from land," said Lt Roberts.

"Wearing 15kg body armour in 27°C under the Mediterranean sun isn't comfortable, but suddenly it feels more so."

All of which wasn't expected when the ship left Portsmouth at the beginning of the year to join a NATO minewarfare group patrolling Europe waters.

"This has certainly been a different deployment from our original tasking, but this conflict and subsequent minelaying has been the exact reason why NATO has a constant mine countermeasures group in the Mediterranean," said Brocklesby's Commanding Officer Lt Cdr James Byron.

"The crew has acted superbly and stoutly to the changing programme and the threat close inshore to the Libyan coast. I could not be more proud of them, or their friends and families back home who have constantly provided support and patience.

"I wish HMS Bangor happy hunting."

After a brief handover in Malta to Faslane-based Bangor, Brocklesby headed west through the Strait of Gibraltar on 'Pompey revs' (ie full speed), stopping in Plymouth briefly to pick up a few friends and family to join them on their homecoming celebration in Portsmouth early this month.

As for the ship which replaces her, she too has had her plans disrupted by global events. **HMS Bangor** has spent the first half of 2011 undergoing Operational Sea Training and exercises to prepare her for a stint with NATO's Standing Mine Countermeasures Group in the North Sea... which has now migrated to the Mediterranean.

As Brocklesby makes her way home and Bangor gets to grip with the challenges of Unified Protector, the guns of **HMS Liverpool** have blazed once again.

But this time, not in anger.

After two months on-and-off patrolling the Gulf of Sirte, the destroyer took a break from operations for a spot of R&R – and ceremonial.

The visit to Grand Harbour coincided with the Queen's official birthday – an event not only celebrated in the UK and RN, but also by islanders in this Commonwealth nation.

And so with the Portsmouth-based warship alongside at Pinto Wharf at mid-day on June 10, her ceremonial team fired a 21-gun

The assistance of Mersey

THE swift actions of the crew of fishery protection ship HMS Mersey helped the critically-ill skipper of a fishing vessel in the Channel.

Mersey was on routine patrol roughly 40 miles southwest of Dover in the middle of the Traffic Separation Zone – the shipping equivalent of a motorway's central reservation – when her bridge team overheard a distress call to Dover Coastguard from the fishing vessel Christyann, whose skipper had suddenly become gravely ill.

Being only 12 miles away, Mersey immediately offered assistance. The ship broke away from the fishing vessel her boarding team was about to inspect and made for the Christyann's position, sending her medical team in one of her rigid inflatable boats.

Once onboard the Mersey's first aiders – PO Rick Bonell and LCH Felicity Liggins – quickly assessed the patient and stabilised his condition.

Just under 20 minutes later the Coastguard helicopter arrived and winched down her paramedic. Once safe to move, the skipper was winched aboard the helicopter and airlifted to Eastbourne Hospital for further treatment.

The winchman paramedic later passed on his thanks to Mersey and in particular her medical team for their prompt actions which prevented the patient's condition from deteriorating further.

The Christyann only had five people onboard, the skipper and four passengers; so the Mersey supplied a member of her crew, Lt Paul Kilbride, to help drive the fishing vessel back to her home port of Rye.

Mersey took station and escorted the Christyann across one of the world's busiest shipping lane to the entrance of Rye harbour, where, as arranged, the RNLI inshore lifeboat took over and helped the passengers bring the boat safely alongside.

In more regular duties, Mersey clocked up more than 5,000 miles at sea – she spent just two days last month alongside, the rest at sea.

The boarding team inspected 54 fishing vessels from eight nations and issued seven cautions for infringements.



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and CO Cdr Rob Dunn – as she returns to Devonport and (above, l-r), a ceremonial salute from HMS Liverpool in ng oil tank in Misrata. (Right) HMS Bangor makes her way out of Faslane to relieve Brocklesby

Joel Roberts, HMS Brocklesby, PO(Phot) Dave Husbands, FRPU West, LA(Phot) Nick Crusham, FRPU North, and LAET Baz Purdue, 217 Flight/815 NAS

s to tyrants

salute – believed to be the first time a Royal Navy vessel has done so in Grand Harbour since the Senior Service withdrew from the island at the end of the 1970s.

Ship's company were invited to a formal birthday party at the British High Commission where Maltese guests were thanked for their ongoing support for the UK – and in particular their assistance during the evacuation of civilians from Libya earlier this year. Valletta was the hub of the rescue mission for Allied warships – not least HM Ships Cumberland and York – and civilian vessels.

Away from formal duties, the 240-plus sailors finally had a chance to let their hair down; a good number of loved ones made the three-hour flight from the UK to spend six days in Malta – indeed, many were waiting for the destroyer as she entered harbour.

"My ship's company were in need of some rest and relaxation – and we were all looking forward to our visit, especially those who had family flying out to meet us. It was a fantastic visit to an island of which I am very fond," said Cdr Colin Williams, Liverpool's Commanding Officer.

His ship hit the headlines back in May when her 4.5in gun opened fire on a rocket battery near Misrata – the first time the main guns of a British warship have been fired in anger since Iraq in 2003.

More recent patrols – interspersed with a quick-fire engine change in Taranto in southern Italy – have been, thankfully, less dramatic with the ship enforcing an arms embargo on the Gaddafi regime and directing Allied air traffic in support of the No Fly Zone over the embattled country, alongside 17 other NATO warships in an impressive task force arrayed across the Gulf of Sirte.

To those duties has been added a fresh one: protecting Britain's biggest warship.

With HMS Ocean now dispatched to the Libya mission as a launch pad for Apache helicopters (*more about them in the centre pages*), she needs safeguarding from any potential foes – just the job Liverpool and her sisters were originally built to do.

To discuss the latter mission, as well as Liverpool's overarching role on Operation Unified Protector, Cdre John Kingwell, Commander UK Task Group, left the Mighty O to visit the Crazy Red Chicken and talk with Cdr Williams plus members of the ship's company.

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Recent milestones

August	Iraqi Navy Day	2010 2009
November	Khawr Al Amaya terminal handed over to Iraqi Navy/Marines control	
February	Delivery of Italian 700 series Patrol Ships, four in total	
September	Delivery of Swiftship PB301 Iraqi Navy Day	
January	Final Iraqi Navy-led inspection of PB301 crew; ready for operations Delivery of Swiftships PB302 and 303 First fully Iraqi Navy-delivered Defender-class coxswain's course First operational patrol by Swiftship PB301	2011
February	Iraqi Navy complete delivery of Naval Basic Training package to 271 ratings Final Iraqi Navy-led inspection of PB302 crew; ready for operations Final Iraqi Navy-led inspection of PB303 crew; ready for operations	
March	Swiftclass 'Train The Trainer course' to train Iraqi Navy Sea Trainers Iraqis conduct a successful Joint Exercise between Iraqi Army, Iraqi Navy and Iraqi Marines, named 'Lion's Leap'	
April-June	ITAM(N) train and mentor the Iraqi Navy Sea Trainers	
May	Operation Telic officially ends	



GOOD morning, Jack. The Iraqi Navy was all but wiped out in 1991. What remained was neglected for the next dozen years. Its few boats rarely put to sea, even for training. Its 600 or so men were in a poor state of readiness.

Your mission, Jack, should you choose to accept it, is to forge a new Iraqi Navy, to train 1,500+ sailors and marines so that they can guard their country's shores and protect its most valuable asset, the oil platforms which generate 85 per cent of the nation's income.

This tape will...



● *The first of the Iraqi Navy's new patrol boats, 301, makes her way past the detritus of previous wars towards her base at Umm Qasr*

Pictures: PO(Phot) Paul A'Barrow, RNAS Culdrose

UMM Qasr, mid-afternoon, Friday March 28 2003.

After Royal Navy minehunters cleared the path down the 44-mile stretch of river, Khawr abd Allah (God's Waterway) from the open sea of the Gulf, RFA Sir Galahad became the first ship into the newly-liberated port.

The waterway was littered with sunken wrecks of wars past.

The cranes and derricks were silent, the warehouses crumbling and empty. There was no power supply.

Prairie dogs and strays stumbled around the wasteland. They, like the gulls which swooped down occasionally, sought food.

This was Iraq's principal port. It was also her principal naval base.

Breathing life back into both seemed, if not impossible, then a tall order.

Eight years later and the port has seen billions of dollars of investment with several hundred thousand tonnes of supplies being offloaded by ships on the busiest days.

And the naval base?

Resurgam.

Last month we recounted how the British mission in Iraq – Operation Telic – formally ended with Royal Navy sailors and Royal Marines pulling out of Umm Qasr, their work training the new Iraqi Navy done.

Limitations of time and space didn't allow us to tell the story of seven years of achievement by Royal Navy personnel...

Since the training mission – under the tutelage of an average of 150 Royal Navy, Royal Marines, British Army, US Navy, Coast Guard and US Marine Corps – began in 2004, some 1,800 Iraqi sailors and marines have been trained to defend their own waters and the Khawr al Amaya and Al Basrah oil terminals.

In the beginning there was just a handful of clapped-out patrol boats and craft, there were no senior ratings – no middle management – and those at the top had owed their positions less to ability than loyalty to the Saddam regime.

It wasn't even a navy. Iraqi Coastal Defence Force was the designation.

Come December this year, the Iraqi Navy – it was renamed in 2005 – will take full responsibility for its waters and rigs with new patrol boats, around 700 trained sailors and 800 trained marines. Mission impossible becomes mission accomplished.

"To have been able to develop the Iraqi Navy to the point where they are able to exercise their responsibilities effectively and with confidence is testament to the efforts of all of the sailors and marines who have, over the years, contributed to the mission. They have made a difference," said Brig Tim Chicken RM, Director of the final incarnation of the Umm Qasr trainers, ITAM(N) – the Iraq Training Assistance Mission (Naval).

Pretty much everyone at Umm Qasr in the final days had been here before, from the man running things on a day-to-day basis at the naval base, Capt Gary Sutton, to AB Bruce Morley – on his fifth tour of duty.

"This has been a worthwhile and enjoyable operational tour," said AB Morley, a military interpreter who by trade is a submariner – one of three deeps on the ITAM-N team. In addition to his translation duties, he is the manager for all the locally-employed interpreters.

"I have seen significant changes over this time. A rejuvenation of the Iraqi Armed Forces, with critical international relationships, ensure that Iraq is well placed to sustain its security."

His boss, Capt Gary Sutton, couldn't have put it any better.

"This has been a real coalition success story, the Iraqi Navy have been well trained and are now equipping with modern and capable patrol boats," he says.

"They already have responsibility for the majority of territorial waters and oil infrastructure and are well on track, with the arrival of further patrol boats and the help of the US forces that remain in Umm Qasr, to take full responsibility by December.

"This operational tour is different from many of the other tours currently taking place as this is entirely Navy-focused; furthermore it has been about training the Iraqi Navy and Iraqi Marines in order for them to become a sustainable force and conduct the security of their maritime environment."

As the Iraqis have progressed, so the training given has altered.

By the final days of the RN team in Umm Qasr, some 73 different courses – anything from basic naval training to the use of small arms and the art of oil platform defence – had been taught.

The Iraqis have also 'enjoyed' the FOST experience, with teams from the Royal Navy's 'quality assurance' organisation flying out to put the crews of the new Swift-class patrol boats through Operational Sea Training.

The Swifts – already patrolling Iraqi territorial waters – will be the backbone of the future Navy.

These patrol craft ploughing up and down the Khawr abd Allah from Umm Qasr into the Gulf are the most visible evidence of the new force, but like the Royal and US Navies it is attempting to emulate, the Iraqi Navy requires behind-the-scenes support.

So in addition to all the typically warry stuff of gunnery, operations, manoeuvres, action stations, the trainers have imparted their knowledge on all aspects of engineering, cooking, logistics, hygiene, administration. Not sexy, but without it you might as well scrap those boats...

Indeed, the engineers were by far the largest portion of personnel based at Umm Qasr after the 'warfighters'.

As well as helping to maintain the patrol craft it was their task to make sure the base had all the power and utilities it needed and to keep vehicles running.

Chefs and logisticians explained the art of ordering food and supplies, storing it, keeping tabs on stocks to ensure a force more than 1,500 strong keeps ticking over.

Royal Marines from the Fleet Protection Group initially provided protection for the naval base itself, but by the time the RN pulled out, those duties were mostly performed by Iraqi marines.

For the Royal Navy personnel posted to Umm Qasr, a typical tour of duty lasted anywhere between three and seven months (those hardy Americans could withstand up to 12 months).

Accommodation comprised 'containerised housing units' – air-conditioned portable cabins with two (and occasionally three) people sharing a room.

The Americans built a first-class gymnasium and a recreational facility with table tennis, games consoles, American TV (and for Brits BFB), darts and pool.

Various competitions take place on a regular basis, ranging from Thursday-night poker, five-a-side football and volleyball to more demanding gym tests and tug-of-war; the Brits enjoyed the upper-hand in most of the physical competitions thanks to the green berets.

For the cerebrally-minded, there was a well-stocked library, and the 'AK Inn' doubled up as a cinema, and the Americans provided free Wi-Fi internet in communal areas, while those wanting to browse the web in private could plug in to broadband for a price.

"I have really enjoyed the tour," said Mne Simpson of the Fleet Protection Troop.

"Having the internet and Paradigm telephone facility to call home makes a real difference and I was really proud to be in the colour party at the handover ceremony."

Wtr Gemma Smith, who provided the admin/pay/allowances/mail support for British personnel on the base, adds: "This has been a brilliant tour, I love it.

"Although I am not involved with training the Iraqis I have witnessed the training that the team have been delivering. The Iraqis are keen and willing to learn; we have made a real difference out here."

● *Iraqi Navy Defender patrol boats race away from Umm Qasr port in formation*



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Surveying with Es

YOU never forget the glorious sight of Devonport, the multi-coloured tower blocks, the unmistakable outlines of the cranes, the fine stonework of the Drake wardroom.

Even if you've been away for two years.

Making her final approach to her berth on the Hamoaze is HMS Enterprise (*pictured here by PO(Phot) Dave Husbands, FRPU West*), bringing a marathon deployment to a close.

The 'star ship' (sorry) of the RN's hydrographic squadron has been updating charts of the Seven Seas.

Her journey up the Hamoaze was almost two years to the day that she left UK shores.

Back then embattled premier Gordon Brown was reshuffling his cabinet, the media were obsessed with the nascent swine flu epidemic, mystery surrounded the fate of Air France Flight 447 bound for Paris from Rio, and linguistic experts determined that Neil Armstrong didn't include the word 'a' in his legendary "one small step…" broadcast from the moon.

Enterprise's departure didn't quite make the headlines on the same scale, but matelots are used to getting on with the job with minimum fuss.

In the two years Enterprise has been away she's gathered valuable data off the coast of West Africa, the northern Gulf and, most recently, the southern Red Sea.

The last work period was spent off Oman, where she was joined by her sister Echo and the Captain Hydrography and Meteorology (aka Hydrographer of the Navy), Capt Vaughan Nail, Enterprise's former CO.

He was keen to witness first hand the work the two Es have been conducting on their protracted deployments (Echo sailed from Devonport in January and won't be home till the eve of the 2012 Olympics – more from her in a mo) and saw some officer of the watch manoeuvres, including a transfer of stores by line between the sisters.

Capt Nail continued his tour by joining Echo, while Enterprise began the long journey home (in excess of 5,000 miles).

As is customary with Royal Navy vessels passing through Suez, Enterprise staged various charity events to raise money for her chosen charity, the Primrose Cancer Ward at Derriford Hospital, Plymouth.

The customary 'Row the Suez' on the machines in the ship's gym raised £170, but even more impressive was the dexterity and brainpower of LCIS Rolly 'Rubiks' Roulston.

Why Rubiks? Well, the leading hand is an expert at solving the hugely-popular 1980s puzzle and pledged to complete the cube as many times as possible during the ten-and-a-half-hour canal passage.

The record is 6.24 seconds, which means technically he could have completed the cube – each of the six sides the same colour rather than a kaleidoscope of white, red, blue, orange, green and yellow – more than 6,000 times.

In fact, the *cubemeister* finished the puzzle 574 times, averaging 66 seconds per completion; his fastest time was an impressive 28.55s. Even more impressive was the £160 raised for charity.

Once through Suez, the ship's company found temperatures had dropped 10°C in 24 hours as Enterprise entered the Med.

After a spot of maintenance and leave for the ship's company business as usual resumes in August with Operational Sea Training ahead of deployment again towards the end of 2011 to resume chart and survey work.

Meanwhile, aboard HMS Echo...

Once safely on the vessel following his transfer from Enterprise, Capt Nail witnessed the ship practising her Chemical-Biological-Radiological-Nuclear Defence (that's NBCD if you prefer old school acronyms…).

The ship tested her 'sanctuary' or 'citadel' – making the core of the ship airtight and impenetrable to toxic gases and substances – and her ability to wash those nasties away, courtesy of her pre-wetting sprinkler system.

Before heading back to the UK Capt Nail stressed the importance of the work the two survey ships are doing in the region and praised Echo which had "made an excellent start to this challenging deployment with several notable accomplishments already under her belt."

"There is a sharp operational edge to the Echo which is clearly the result of careful planning and training, underpinned by a strong spirit and sense of mission."

Enterprise was one of three ships in as many weeks to link up with H87.

Before the mid-ocean rendezvous, Echo had paid a brief visit to Muscat in Oman – where she found HMS Monmouth taking a breather from counter-piracy operations.

Some of Echo's ship's company will be delighted to have bumped into the Black Duke – the frigate's medical officer came aboard to carry out check-ups and vaccinations – and others will have been less chuffed. Monmouth's clubz ran an early-morning work out for those out-of-date with their fitness tests (the early start was to avoid the Gulf heat rather than any sadistic tendencies on the part of the PTI…).

The relatively-short stop in the Omani capital allowed the latest rotation of crew – Echo is sustained in theatre in the long run by changing one third of her ship's company regularly – lots of mail and spare parts and stores delivered, courtesy of the RAF.

The last of the three link-ups was with the 28,000-tonne RFA Argus which, like the Black Duke, is supporting the concerted counter-piracy effort off the Horn of Africa, serving as a base for Royal Marines and Merlin helicopters from 820 Naval Air Squadron.

As with the rendezvous with Enterprise, meeting Argus allowed some good officer of the watch practice, not least for the young officers undergoing training on Echo, while the survey ship loaned two senior rates to give Argus' civilian sailors plenty of gunnery training to keep their marksmanship up to speed.

All these link-ups are good for morale, but the real reason Echo is out there is not to renew old acquaintances.

She's gathering bathymetric data – recording the depth of the ocean – off the Somali coast to help the international struggle against the scourge of piracy.

Not only is the Somali Basin a hotbed of piratical activity, but the charts of the waters here are old and inadequate, hence Echo was sent in to provide much-needed data.

Her state-of-the-art sensors have been in near constant use taking recordings – data which will be fed back to the UK Hydrographic Office in Taunton to allow its cartographers to produce up-to-date charts for lawful seafarers.

Among the new features Echo has found is a guyot (pronounced *ge-oh*), a flat-topped sea mountain rising hundreds of metres from the seabed.

"This region is at the centre of current piracy activity and it is also a region of sparse environmental data so HMS Echo's work is important in providing coalition warships with the environmental edge in deterring this nefarious activity," said the ship's Commanding Officer Cdr Michael O'Sullivan.



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A dream come true...

SHE may not have the most attractive lines in the Fleet, but to some Protector is a dream come true.

She is to her Commanding Officer, Capt Peter Sparkes – and not just because he will take her south late this autumn for her first deployment as interim ice patrol ship, regarded as one of the best taskings in the Navy.

As a teenager, Capt Sparkes was inspired to consider a career in a dark blue suit by the Falklands Conflict – and the job which really took his eye was CO of the old HMS Endurance.

Almost three decades on, and Capt Sparkes has realised that dream, and is in charge of a ship which makes up for her cluttered look with cutting-edge technology and some impressive home comforts.

The 5,000-tonne ship was built ten years ago as a polar research/subsea support ship, an improved version of the current British Antarctic Survey vessel RSS Ernest Shackleton.

Although built as an icebreaker, the former MV Polarbjørn (Polar Bear) is a versatile ship, her most recent job having been as support vessel for an oil platform in the Caribbean.

With HMS Endurance awaiting a decision on her future – the Red Plum almost foundered three years ago off Chile when her engine room flooded – the Royal Navy identified Polarbjørn as a suitable stop-gap, allowing ocean survey vessel HMS Scott to return to her 'normal' role.

Polarbjørn was by no means perfect – but she was a lot closer by the time she emerged from a high-speed/quickfire refit at Odense in Denmark.

Her flight deck, perched atop her bridge roof, was moved astern in an operation that took just three days, while her engine and gearbox were stripped down and overhauled, including the replacement of worn gears.

Holes were cut into the 4in-thick steel plates of her hull to fit a multibeam echo sounder system, and gun-mountings were fitted to her decks.

Capt Sparkes paid tribute to the efforts of the Danish shipyard workers as he handed his command over to their Portsmouth counterparts to finish the job of turning the commercial Polarbjørn into the RN Protector for the duration of her three-year lease from Norwegian company GC Rieber Shipping.

"Today marks a key milestone in the regeneration of the Royal Navy's ice patrol ship – a signature UK defence capability," said Capt Sparkes.

"I am very proud of what my ship's company and all associated with this project have achieved in such short order.

"To take command of such a special capability is a unique privilege."

Capt Sparkes said that the ship's company represented a broad range of experience.

"Some come from General Service – frigates and destroyers," said the CO, who commanded the Type 22 frigate HMS Cumberland on anti-piracy patrol in 2008.

"Some of my ship's company have hydrographic experience, and quite a few are from Ark Royal, bringing quite a lot of experience we are keen to draw on.

"And we have some from Endurance as well."

The ship was officially renamed on June 1, and was due to commission on June 23, as *Navy News* went to press – a red-letter day for those with an interest in the frozen continent, as it marks the 50th anniversary of the enactment of the Antarctic Treaty which Protector and her predecessors work hard to uphold.

Protector had barely secured to the South West Wall jetty in Portsmouth Naval Base when the media were allowed on for a brief tour before phase 2 of her refit.

Navy communications equipment will be fitted, and the spacious wardroom will receive a British makeover – "pictures of the Queen and the like" – though the cafeteria, where the entire ship's company eat food from the "fantastic" galley, will retain its chic blond-wood appearance.

She has accommodation for around 100 and an array of cranes (including one of 50 tonnes' capability) to load stores and launch and recover boats.

Future deployments may see Protector equipped with a helicopter and landing craft, but for her first trip she will have seven boats – two Pacific 22 RIBs, one survey motor boat (a new build, named James Caird IV), a fast rescue craft and three modular inflatables.

Protector has capacious food stores, and her three cargo holds, forward, aft and lower, are also impressive.

Accessible through massive hatches in the deckhead – essentially the whole ceiling opens up – the holds will contain pallets of stores, vehicles (including BV 206 all-terrain vehicles and quad bikes), and part of the lower hold is already being transformed into a gym.

Close to the holds is the mechanism which lowers the ship's azimuth thruster from its well in the hull, giving Protector a high degree of manoeuvrability – or stability.

Capt Sparkes has already seen the vessel's ability to 'hover' using her five thrusters and data from GPS systems.

"We called into Falmouth on our way to Denmark from the Caribbean," said Capt Sparkes.

"There was 40 knots of wind yet she held to within 70cms of her position with no effort – very impressive.

"She was acting as an accommodation ship for an oil platform, and she would sit there, just off the oil rig, kept in place by the thrusters."

The hi-tech engine management system brings with it one extra member of the ship's company – a Norwegian Chief Engineer (the role is shared by two men) who will remain with Protector throughout her charter to the Royal Navy.

Her large bridge, close to the bow of the ship, has 360-degree visibility – all of which is something of a mixed blessing in rough weather.

"Coming across the Atlantic we knew all about it," said Capt Sparkes.

"We were shipping water over the bridge in the Channel, but she doesn't really roll too much and is fairly stable because there is so much below the waterline."

The layout of the bridge also betrays Protector's commercial origins – there is even a cosy gathering of sofas round a low table to the starboard side, though Capt Sparkes cannot see it catching on in HM ships...

Although the ship and her company are preparing for their first deployment in late November, thoughts are already turning to the subsequent austral summer season and a few more 'tweaks' to her configuration.

That could include the lowering of the flight deck and removal of a crane to allow for a hangar with level access.

Protector is capable of operating at sea for 330 days a year, and she is expected to complete work periods from a base at Mare Harbour in the Falklands.

However, her wider capabilities offer some advantages over Endurance – Protector could be just as effective in the Caribbean during the hurricane season or in operations off the west coast of Africa.

And the fact that she is a polar research vessel means she would not be limited to the Southern Ocean – with new sea lanes opening in the Arctic ice cap there may be tasks which she could tackle in the Northern Hemisphere, depending on UK policy.

An Antarctic deployment is a new departure for Capt Sparkes, whose sea time has featured the Gulf and Middle East pretty heavily.

"It is going to be different, but it is a huge privilege," he said.

"The ship's company have been absolutely fantastic – they have worked exceptionally hard.

"They have put in some really long hours over the past six weeks and I couldn't have asked for more.

"The ship's complement will be 76 – we have 45 on board at the moment, and the rest are on courses and training.

"When we deploy we will have additional Royal Marines, divers and so on."

This is not the first Protector, nor is she even the first ice patrol ship Protector.

The first was a 44-gun Fifth Rate wrecked by a cyclone off India in 1776, which existed at the same time as a fireship of the same name.

The third was a brig which was converted to a survey vessel in 1817, while the fourth, a gunboat, was cancelled in build in 1863.

The sixth was, like the current (seventh) Protector, a commercial vessel – launched as the Seaforth Saga in 1975, she was bought by the Royal Navy in 1983 as a Falklands patrol ship and sold in 1987.

But it is the fifth Protector which bears the closest investigation.

Launched in 1936 at Yarrow in Glasgow as a fast netlayer/target-towing vessel, she served in the South Atlantic and home waters in World War 2, taking part in the Norwegian campaign before being sent to the Mediterranean where she was struck by an aerial torpedo.

After emergency repairs she was towed to Bombay for major repairs to her engine room, before returning to the UK.

By the end of 1945 she had been re-engined and spent a time in Reserve before embarking on the first part of a major refit at Devonport in 1955, when she was converted for service as the guardship for the Falkland Islands dependencies.

Over a period of four years, during her break from patrol duties down south, a flight deck was built over her netlaying deck, a hangar added for two Westland Whirlwind helicopters, her hull was strengthened, her bow remodelled, a crane added amidships and (mercifully for the watchkeepers) her bridge was enclosed.

When complete her original displacement of 2,900 tons had increased to 4,250 tons fully loaded.

She carried a ship's company of 21 officers and 238 ratings, and their task was to assume the duties of the frigates which were poorly-equipped for the task.

Operating mainly in the South Atlantic and Antarctic region she was officially reclassified as the Navy's ice patrol ship in 1959, by which time she was into her fourth 'season'.

She completed 13 such 'seasons' before being paid off in May 1968 to be replaced by the last HMS Endurance, and was scrapped in Scotland in 1970.

The links between Protector VI and VII live on in some of the Naval paraphernalia added in the current ship's rapid refits.

The newly-installed wooden Battle Honours board was 'retrieved' from the drill hall Long Eaton Sea Cadet unit TS Indomitable by Engineer Officer Lt Richard Grant.

As part of the arrangement, a party of cadets from the unit were invited to travel from Derbyshire for the commissioning ceremony.

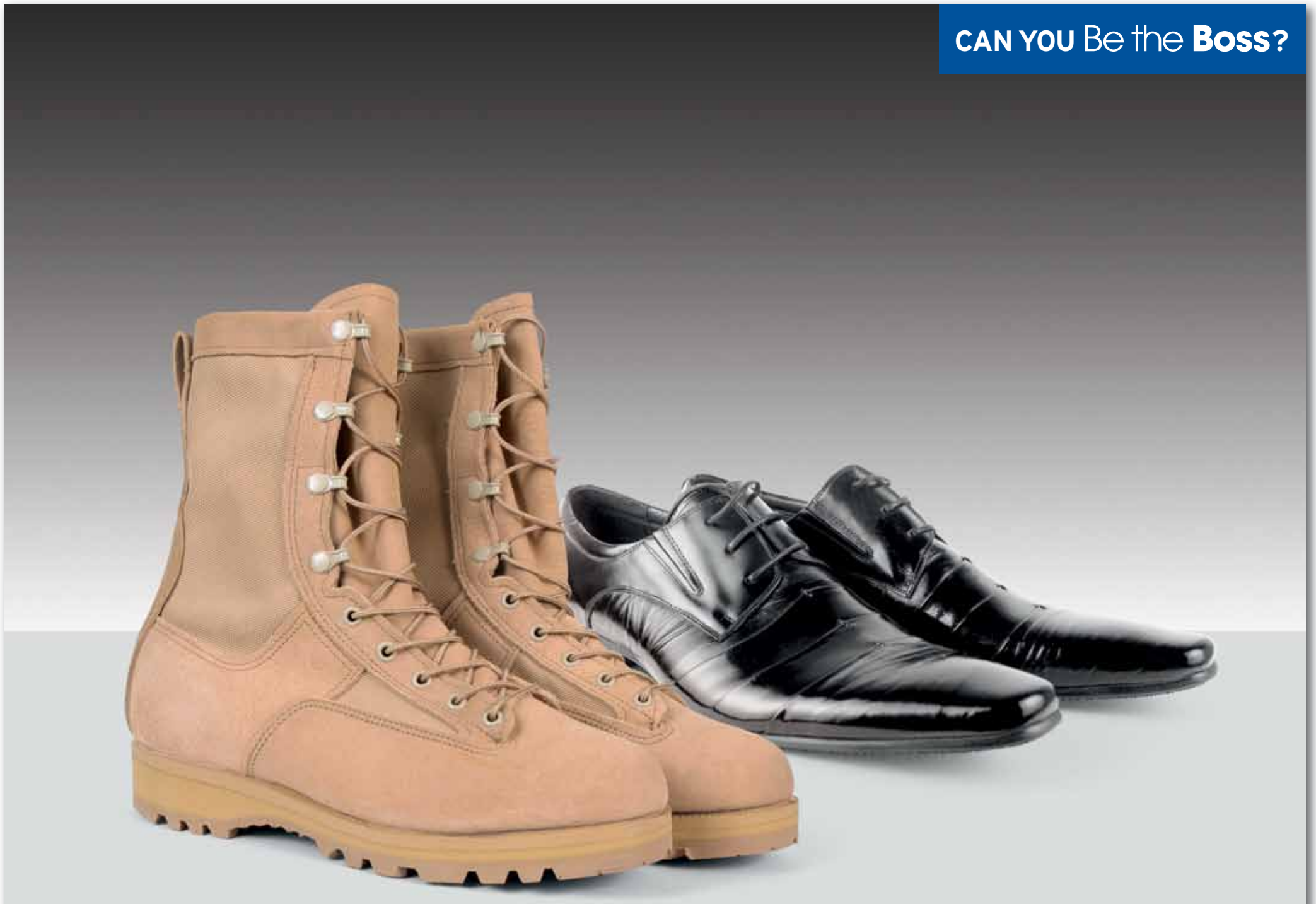
The metal nameplate from the former netlayer has also been obtained – the 4-metre plate, which weighs around 250kg, was handed over by the Royal Naval Museum, and has been placed in a sheltered cross-passage to prevent weather damage.



● *Capt Peter Sparkes addresses ship's company and guests at the official naming ceremony fo HMS Protector, pictured by LA(PHOT) Arron Hoare. Main picture: Protector leaves Denmark following the major engineering phase of her quickfire refit*



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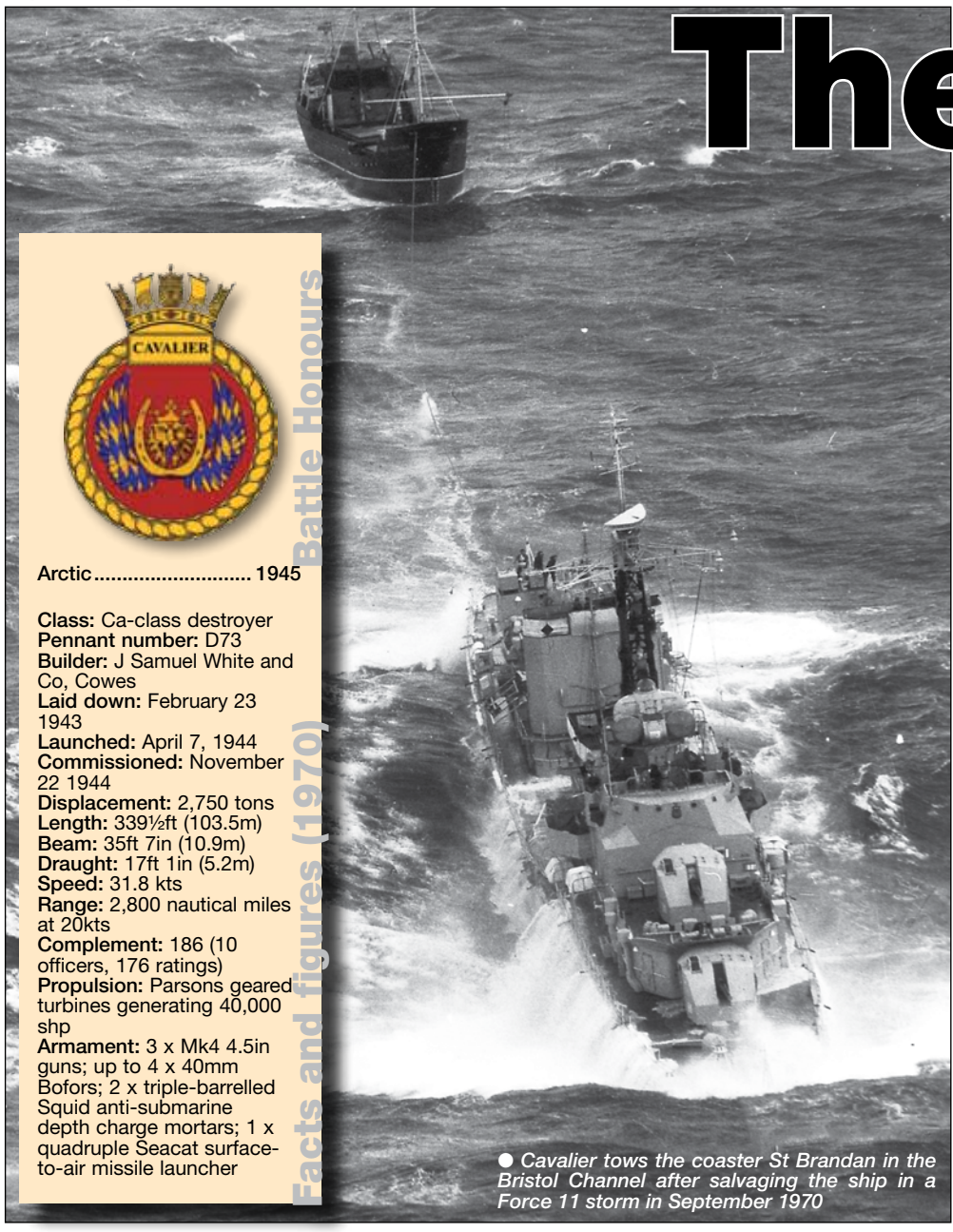
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CLASSIC SHIPS of the ROYAL NAVY No. 3

The last laugh



Battle Honours

Arctic 1945

Facts and figures (1970)

Class: Ca-class destroyer
Pennant number: D73
Builder: J Samuel White and Co, Cowes
Laid down: February 23 1943
Launched: April 7, 1944
Commissioned: November 22 1944
Displacement: 2,750 tons
Length: 339½ft (103.5m)
Beam: 35ft 7in (10.9m)
Draught: 17ft 1in (5.2m)
Speed: 31.8 kts
Range: 2,800 nautical miles at 20kts
Complement: 186 (10 officers, 176 ratings)
Propulsion: Parsons geared turbines generating 40,000 shp
Armament: 3 x Mk4 4.5in guns; up to 4 x 40mm Bofors; 2 x triple-barrelled Squid anti-submarine depth charge mortars; 1 x quadruple Seacat surface-to-air missile launcher

● *Cavalier tows the coaster St Brandan in the Bristol Channel after salvaging the ship in a Force 11 storm in September 1970*

SEVEN decades after the Royal Navy's greatest test, living links with the 1939-45 war grow fewer by the day.

The men who came through the six-year struggle against the Axis powers are now in their 80s at their youngest.

As for their battlewagons, they are even fewer: Belfast, Whimbrel, Alliance (she was launched a fortnight before the Japanese threw in the towel), X-24.

There are no British dreadnoughts, no aircraft carriers, and there is only one 'greyhound of the seas' – HMS Cavalier.

She was one of 32 C-class destroyers (not one was sunk under the White Ensign, although HMS Charity was lost under the Pakistani flag in action against the Indians in 1971) and one of 112 destroyers built under the War Emergency Programme.

In her WW2 career, Cavalier was relatively unremarkable. Indeed, her time on active operations – a couple of sweeps off Norway and three days escorting a convoy – amounted to barely one week in harm's way.

She did, however, take part in the surrender of the U-boats – Operation Deadlight – and may have taken part in the final days of the war with Japan; Cavalier was earmarked for the East Indies Fleet but was damaged by another British destroyer during exercises before sailing.

By the time HMS Cavalier was fixed, the war was over. After several months' duties in Trincomalee, the destroyer paid off in May 1946. She would not return to active service until 1957.

In her second life, the destroyer served in the Far East and Mediterranean, spent another period in reserve, and needed repairs after a collision with a Liberian tanker.

By the beginning of the 1970s, the Cs were the last of the wartime destroyers still in service – just two on active duties: Caprice and Cavalier.

Caprice no longer enjoyed a front-line role; she still put to sea, however, as a training vessel for marine engineers.

Cavalier, on the other hand, was very much active in UK and Mediterranean waters after a final refit in early 1970. Despite many modifications made over her lifespan, such as the introduction of Seacat anti-aircraft missiles, she retained an open bridge to the end.

Despite her age, Cavalier was no slouch. Forty years ago this month she was locked in a duel (but not to the death) with the aptly-named HMS Rapid as the two old ladies – Cavalier 27, Rapid one year older – fought for the title of Britain's fastest warship.

The arena was the North Sea, some 40 miles off Aberdeen, and a 64-mile course. As the artificers' training vessel and in tip-top condition, Rapid was the favourite (Ladbrokes offered odds no better than 5-4 on).

The editor of the *Daily Telegraph* offered the winners a silver salver, although a greater incentive perhaps was a gallon of whisky donated by one Scottish distillery.

The race lived up to its billing – and it was going to form much to the delight of Rapid's ship's company and the assorted press aboard.

That was until a safety valve released steam with a deafening roar and Rapid became rather less, er, rapid.

After a two-hour duel Cavalier edged ahead (some say by 16 yards, others by 60) having averaged 31.8kts (36.6mph) over the course. The Cavaliers gave their rivals a V-sign – for victory, of course.

In a little over a year, both ships were gone. HMS Eastbourne assumed Rapid's training role; the frigate was eventually sunk as a target in 1981.

As for Cavalier, she was laid up in Portsmouth and an uncertain future. A five-year campaign to save Britain's last wartime destroyer finally ensured she was not broken up, but handed over to a trust.

And so began the venerable ship's third and, for some time, rather transitory life. First she opened as a museum ship in Southampton. Then in Brighton. Neither venture brought enough visitors to sustain Cavalier.

South Tyneside Council stepped in and bought the ship. She would be the focal point of a new exhibition centre celebrating the North East's proud shipbuilding heritage.

The centre never materialised and, by the mid-90s, it looked like the ship might go abroad, or be broken up. Enter a new trust, a lot of hard work and some not inconsiderable fund-raising (there was even a Cavalier Beer brewed to support the campaign) and pressure.

With more than £800,000 lottery money and a fitting new home, Chatham historic dockyard, the destroyer's last base on active duties, Cavalier entered her current berth in May 1999.

In the past 12 years she has become a living tribute to every man who served in a destroyer between 1939 and 1945. More than 11,000 men were lost keeping the sea lanes open in these classes of ships. No fewer than 142 destroyers were lost. HMS Cavalier is the last of that proud line.

HEROES OF THE ROYAL NAVY No.86 – No.4 RNAS Expeditionary Force



WEARING tropical pith helmets, sailors from HMS Severn make their way up the Rufiji River and the wreck of the cruiser Königsberg.

This month's 'lucky dip' into the seemingly-infinite archives of the Imperial War Museum takes us to December 1916 and East Africa.

It is nearly 18 months since the guns of monitors Severn and Mersey (big guns, shallow draught) cornered the trapped German cruiser 15 miles up the African river.

The wreck of the ship was a popular 'tourist attraction' for Royal Navy vessels patrolling this part of Africa – today Tanzania – who reported on the state of the warship to their masters at the Admiralty... and picked up the odd souvenir...

Although the guns of Severn and her sister did for the Königsberg (although the last act of the Battle of the Rufiji Delta was actually the scuttling of the German ship by her crew when they could fight on no more), the most fascinating aspect of the cruiser's last battle was the pioneering use of naval air power.

For the mother country also dispatched a tiny air force – No. 4 RNAS Expeditionary Force – with four seaplanes to hunt down the Königsberg.

The planes set up base on the tiny island of Niororo, home to 30 natives who would gather around the contraptions, then jump back startled as the engine fired up and kicked up clouds of sand on the beach.

On April 25 1915, Cdr Eric Nanson headed out over the Rufiji, over the "dense growth of mangroves – a happy hunting ground for innumerable hippopotami, crocodiles and mosquitoes", with the aim of finding the cruiser.

He found her, hiding in the westernmost tributary of the river, smoke billowing from her three funnels, and marked her on his chart. As he passed over the cruiser volleys of rifle and shell fire buffeted his aircraft. He was soon out of range, only for German officers and native soldiers hiding in the mangroves to open fire.

Nanson made it safely back to base, but the Shorts were no better suited to these climes than their crews: the seaplanes were underpowered, struggled in the heat, and the glue on their propellers simply would not stick.

Four new aircraft arrived from France and set up base on Mafia Island. Wireless transmitters were fitted to the aircraft so aircrew could report the fall of the monitors' shots.

Before first light on July 6, Severn and Mersey moved into the labyrinth of tributaries. Already in the sky was Lt Harold Watkins, carrying a handful of bombs.

Watkins watched as the monitors opened fire from a range of 10,000 yards – their shells fell a couple of hundred yards short.

And then Königsberg responded. "Her firing was magnificent," wrote Watkins. Severn and Mersey disappeared behind huge spouts of water. Mersey was hit, a turret put out of action and a flash fire raged which almost blew the vessel out of the water.

Between them, the two Expeditionary Force's aeroplanes had circled the German crusier for 15 hours, all the time subjected to rifle and small arms fire. Given his vantage point, few people had a better overview of the fighting that day than Harold Watkins. In one word, July 6 had been "discouraging".

But not July 11. After trading blows for half an hour, the battle turned in the Britons' favour. In a seven-minute spell the German cruiser was hit repeatedly by the British guns.

Above, Lt John Cull reported the fall of the monitors' shells until the aircraft was rocked by shrapnel exploding in front of it. Königsberg had scored a lucky hit; it was her penultimate anti-aircraft shell.

Cull struggled to control his aircraft 2,500ft above the Rufiji. The engine stopped. The Henri Farman stuttered downwards. Cull set it down in the river next to Mersey. As she touched the water, she flipped over. The observer was thrown clear, but Cull was trapped upside down in the wreckage, finally freeing himself and swimming hurriedly for safety lest they be mauled by crocodiles or picked off by German snipers.

Cull's place in the skies was taken by Harold Watkins. He watched the unequal struggle as the Königsberg was turned into a twisted, tangled, blazing lump – caused in part by the British guns, in part by her crew scuttling her.

In the years which followed, the wreck was broken up – her crew salvaged the guns and used them in the war on land against the British – while the ship herself was finally devoured by the elements in 1966 such that little, if anything, remains on the site of her last battle.

The name Königsberg was resurrected twice more by the German Navy, both cruisers; the first was handed over to the French Navy as part of Germany's reparations for losing WW1.

The final Königsberg also fell foul of British naval aviators. She was sunk by Blackburn Skuas of 800 and 803 Naval Air Squadrons off Bergen in 1940. Three direct hits caused her to capsize – the first major warship sunk by dive-bomber.

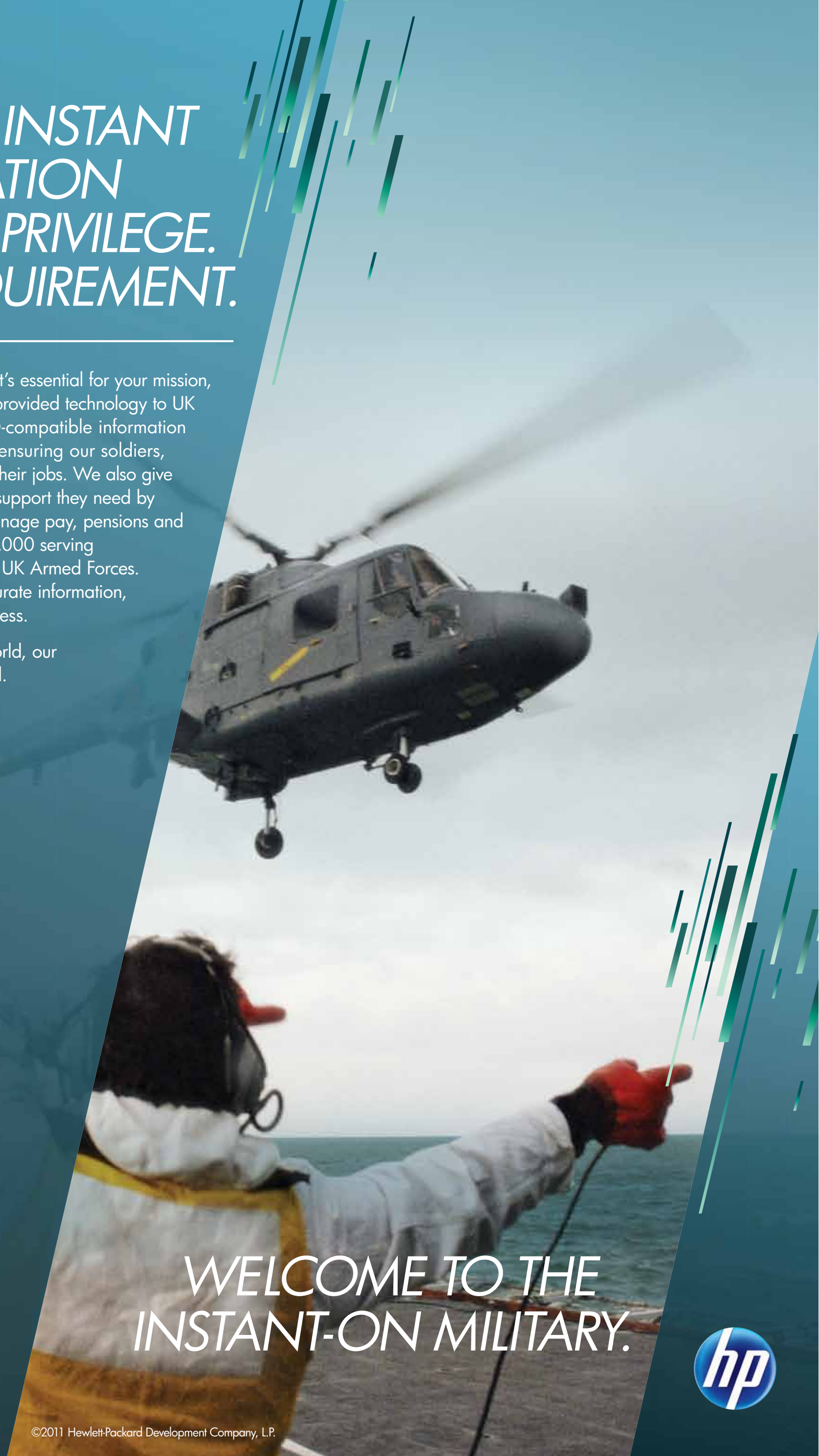
■ THIS photograph (SP 967) – and 9,999,999 others from a century of war and peace – can be viewed or purchased at **www.iwmcollections.org.uk**, by emailing **photos@IWM.org.uk**, or by phoning 0207 416 5333.

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WELCOME TO THE INSTANT-ON MILITARY.

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● *Cpl Spencer RM of K Company, 42 Commando, takes a moment to clean his GPMG in his room in a small compound during their deployment to Nahre-e Saraj South*



● *J Company take cover in an old poppy field while waiting for a Chinook helicopter to pick them up*

The fa

WITH green marker smoke swirling around, a Chinook pulls away from a compound once held by insurgents, watched by a Royal Marine during the largest offensive of the year in Helmand.

Operation Omid Haft (Hope Seven) is intended to clear a series of villages southwest of the regional centre of Gereshk of "an evil force in the daily lives of the people" in the words of 3 Commando Brigade's Commanding Officer Brig Ed Davis.

The joint Allied-Afghan National Army operation saw hundreds of troops move in by air and on the ground on the villages of Kopak, Malgir and Loy Mandeh.

In the small hours of Thursday May 26, nearly 300 Afghan troops and riflemen from 1 Rifles – 3 Cdo's attached Army battalion – were landed by helicopter around Malgir with the terrain lit by flares fired by the guns of 29 Commando Regiment Royal Artillery.

Another 200 Allied and Afghan troops moved in over the ground and by the end of the first day of the operation, Malgir had been secured.

The next step was to clear out the vipers' nest of Loy Mandeh Kalay – once a thriving settlement, now almost deserted thanks to a large number of makeshift bombs and high levels of insurgent activity.

The village proved to be as dangerous as feared; the troops found numerous improvised devices and, sadly, one detonated, killing two Royal Marines – Mne Samuel Alexander MC and Lt Oliver Augustin – of Juliet Company, 42 Commando.

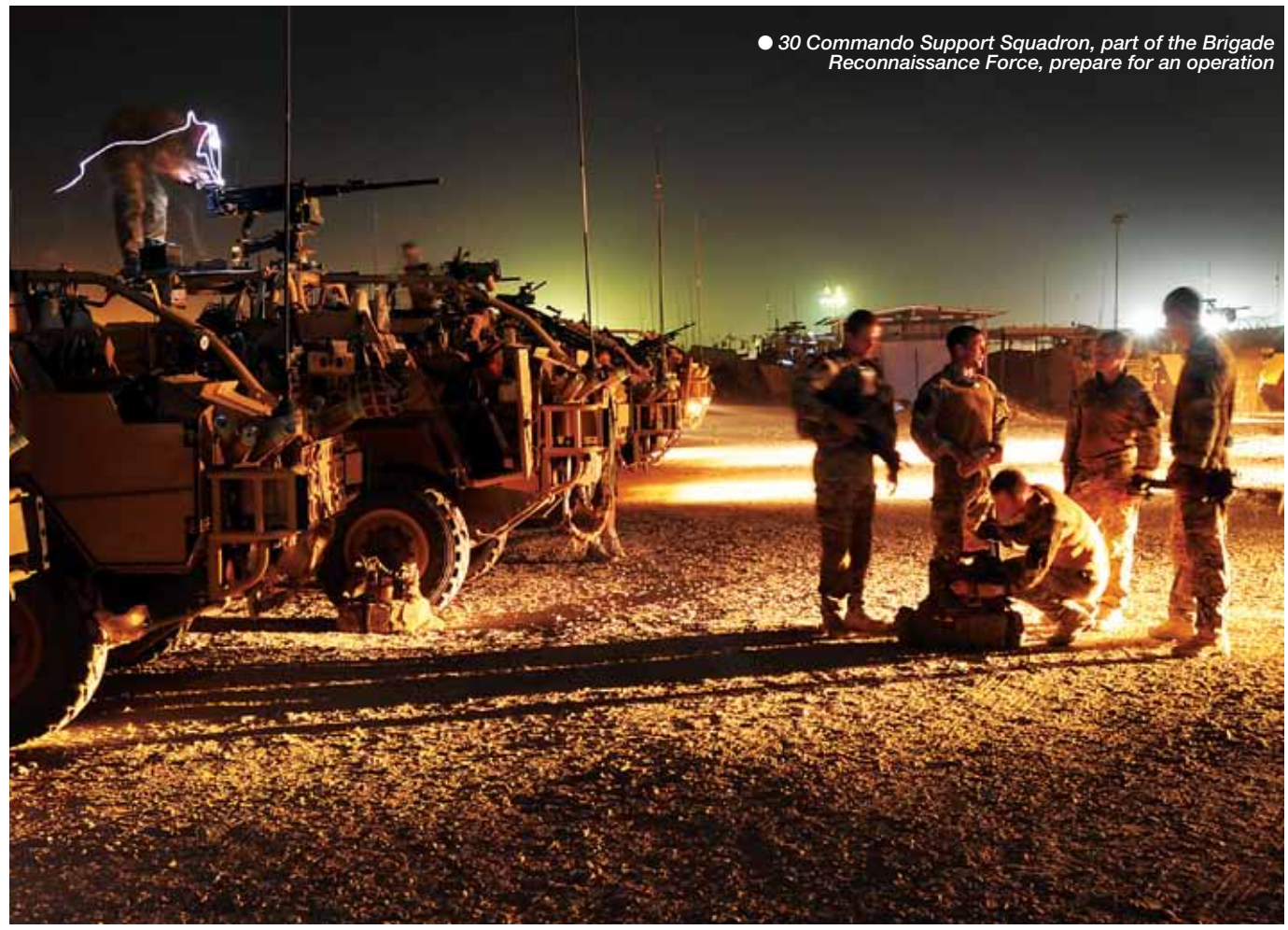
"Two of our finest men have made the ultimate sacrifice, selflessly giving their lives in the service of their country and for the good of the Afghan people," said 42's Commanding Officer Lt Col Ewen Murchison.

"They lived and fought alongside one another and our lives are much worse for them not being here. Tragic as this event is, 42 Commando stand resolute and focused on the task in hand, undeterred. That's what Ollie and Sam would have wanted."

With Juliet Coy involved in







● *30 Commando Support Squadron, part of the Brigade Reconnaissance Force, prepare for an operation*

abric of a nation

what was described as "heavy fighting" in the west of the village, Lima Coy and Afghan soldiers pushed in from the east and drove the insurgents out of Loy Mandeh Kalay.

Specialist teams of Royal Engineers were called in to clear the compounds of bombs so troops could set up check points and begin establishing themselves in the village before the insurgents had time to return.

Next, Lima Company sent a patrol into the heart of Loy Mandeh Kalay to get a feeling for local sentiment. It was the first Allied patrol conducted in the area for many years.

"We followed the road along the Nahr-e Bughra Canal, constantly on the lookout for IEDs or booby traps," explained Maj Alec Burrell.

"As we reached the outskirts of the village, a local man met us and agreed to escort us in to the centre to meet with the local elders. We held a shura with the mullah and explained to them what we were hoping to achieve.

"They were extremely welcoming to the ANA and the Royal Marines and I am confident the Afghan Army will develop positive relationships with the community."

The success of the three-day thrust was marked by the symbolic act of tearing down a large Taleban propaganda banner on the edge of the village – replaced by the raising of the Afghan flag.

Afghan and Allied military leaders are confident that the increase in security provided by Omid Haft will encourage civilians to return to their homes and that the once-thriving bazaar will buzz again in just a few weeks.

"For several weeks now, the combined Afghan and International Security Assistance Force troops have shown great courage and resolve in clearing one of the most dangerous areas in central Helmand," said Brig Davis.

"Much hard work remains to be done; however, as the operation draws to a close the people of Nahr-e Saraj are one step closer to a life free from insurgents. I salute the supreme professionalism and unfailing bravery of the Afghan and ISAF heroes whose sacrifice has made this possible."

STROLLING across dusty ground outside Loy Mandeh escorted by Royal Marines and Afghan soldiers, villagers do something unthinkable just days ago: discuss a future without the Taleban.

Only a week after the green berets of 42 Commando and Afghan National Army soldiers drove the insurgents out of the area, the governor visited to discuss rebuilding lives in what was 'the last ulcer' of Helmand.

At the end of May a concerted push by the Bickleigh-based Royals, British Army soldiers and Afghan troops – Operation Omid Haft (Hope Seven) – cleared a series of villages, including Loy Mandeh, Kopak and Malgir.

With the Taleban gone, more than 100 community leaders and elders gathered for a shura – meeting or council – outside Loy Mandeh with District Governor Habibullah, who promised to help breathe life back into the shops and bazaars – once thriving, but now a barren wasteland thanks to the odious influence of the insurgents – by encouraging locals to play their part in restoring prosperity.

Governor Habibullah assured elders his government "can provide for you where the Taleban have failed."

The shura was witnessed by 42's Commanding Officer, Lt Col Ewen Murchison, as well as his unit photographer, LA(Phot) Dave Hillhouse, who recorded the historic meeting for posterity on camera.

Both men were extremely encouraged by the response of villagers to the end of the insurgents' reign of oppression.

"Many of the people here had been forced to flee from their homes up into the Bowri area to escape the insurgents. Their willingness to return to their village and so soon after it had been liberated and in such numbers is an encouraging sign that there is a genuinely strong appetite among the people for change," said Lt Col Murchison.

"It's clear they all want to help so that business and commerce can return to Loy Mandeh in the near future."

LA(Phot) Hillhouse added: "It was amazing to see so many people turning up. We started off with about 50 locals, but half way through the shura, several vehicles all turned up with around another 50 people.

"Everyone seemed very relaxed, and the Afghan Army and police seemed to be working with each other very effectively."

Earlier in the same month, the Naval photographer had attended a Shura led by the District Governor of Nadhi-e Ali North with the Afghan National Police and attended by elders and community leaders from the surrounding areas (*photographed below*).

Work has now begun to clear up the bazaar so shops can resume trading, while Royal Engineers from the Counter-IED Task Force have cleared upwards of 20 home-made bombs to ensure routes around the district were safe for use by people and vehicles.

YOU can follow the day-to-day trials – and triumphs – of Royal Marines in Afghanistan thanks to excellent diaries filmed by the men themselves. ITV News has given to the green berets of 45 Commando tiny digital camcorders to record life on the front-line in Helmand.

Nine men have signed up for the* Tour of Duty *series of short films, from Yankee Company's leader Maj Jon Bubb who gives a commander's eye view of the challenging peacekeeping mission, to senior NCOs and junior ranks.

The diaries provide a cross-section of life with 45 – from the kit the men use and the facilities at the various forward bases, to patrols, meeting the locals, dealing with insurgents.

ITV is following the men throughout their six months in Afghanistan and broadcasting some excerpts of the diaries.

***You can also watch the complete diaries on the broadcaster's website at* www.itv.com/news/tourofduty/**

■ ***Continued over the page***



Pictures: LA(Phot) Dave Hillhouse, PO(Phot) Hamish Burke

The fabric of a nation

■ *Continued from previous page*

A TWO-week surge by Royal Marines and Afghan troops has cleared another district of Helmand of the insurgent scourge.

The district of Zaborabad in Nad-e Ali (South) was bandit country, used by insurgents to launch their forays into neighbouring Nad-e Ali and strike at Allied and Afghan troops – as well as the civilian populace.

In the latest of a concerted series of thrusts into insurgent strongholds by 3 Commando Brigade, green berets of Zulu Company, 45 Commando, joined Afghan soldiers from 3 Brigade 215 Corps to reclaim Zaborabad.

The Afghans took the lead, clearing compounds and using their specialist teams, who have been trained by UK forces, to find and destroy improvised explosive devices.

After a fortnight of searches and patrols, the area was deemed secure enough to no longer be regarded as a safe haven for the insurgents – and control was handed over to the Afghan Government. Since the operation began, significant progress has been made in clearing the area of insurgents and ensuring they can no longer use it as a refuge.

"The results so far have been really positive; the roads are now clear of IEDs and the local people feel much safer now the insurgents have been pushed out," said Zulu Company's Capt Kane Holford RM.

His commander, 45 Cdo's Commanding Officer Lt Col Oliver Lee, added: "This operation brings another significant chunk of Nad-e Ali and therefore Helmand Province under the control of the Government of Afghanistan. In doing so, it denies the insurgent an area in which he used to operate with impunity. This is appealing to the mass of the people whose confidence actively to reject the insurgency is tangibly growing."

With the insurgents now driven out of Zaborabad, officers from the Afghan Local Police (ALP) – volunteers from the local community who have been trained by 45 Cdo and other members of Combined Force Nad-e Ali South to support the full-time Afghan National Police – have moved in to help provide long-term security.

"The ALP love the training; they are so enthusiastic and are great students to instruct," said Sgt Maj Fullerton RE, one of the trainers of the part-time force.

"Many of the officers have day jobs to do as well as providing security. They are passionate about providing lasting security for their home towns and villages."

The local ALP Commander, Molim Sher Agha added: "We have been very impressed with the training and my men are now ready to move into the checkpoints and help protect their community. The local people are sick of insurgent intimidation."

ROYAL Marines seized a massive haul of home-made bombs and weapons during a determined sweep of a one-time Taleban stronghold.

Green berets of the Brigade Reconnaissance Force and Afghan troops carried out a concerted operation in the Zumbalay region of Nahr-e-Saraj North, near the regional centre of Gereshk.

Using intelligence to guide their searches of compounds and suspected safe houses, the joint commando-Afghan force moved through the settlements of Khar Nikah, Saidan, Yakchal, Adinza and Rahim – all villages which were once a hotbed of insurgent activity.

Despite an improving security situation in recent months, intelligence suggested that insurgent commanders were still operating in the Zumbalay district – so the troops moved in.

With the Afghan troops of 3 Kandak 215 Brigade in the lead and the BRF in support, a wave of daylight searches was carried out.

The intelligence was spot-on and the haul was rich:

- 34 pressure plates for bombs
- 40kg of homemade explosives
- 1 suicide vest
- 1 AK47
- 1 rocket-propelled grenade
- 1 machine-gun
- 25 batteries (used as detonators for bombs)
- 150 rounds of ammunition
- various components for bombs and detonators
- four suspected bombmakers arrested

"The intelligence for the operation turned out to be accurate, but we didn't expect to find as many bomb components and weapons as we did," said Sgt John Phillips RM.

"It's a great result – and a great feeling for all the lads involved knowing that a substantial amount of improvised explosive devices have been seized and cannot now be employed."

The Officer Commanding BRF Maj Nick Foster added: "The destruction of this bomb factory and large cache of improvised explosive devices – with the detention of four assessed bomb-makers – will have a significant effect in reducing the insurgent threat to both the military and civilians in the Nahr-e Saraj area.

"It should also mean hopefully that there will be fewer innocent civilians injured or killed by the indiscriminate use of bombs."

His unit is a specialist force which is particularly adept at operating deep behind enemy lines for protracted periods and currently comprises Royal Marines, troops from 24 Commando Regiment RE, gunners of 29 Commando Regiment RA, Royal Military Police and the 9th 12th Lancers.

Clubs in the Green Zone

THE journey for me began in early October when I had recently joined HQ 3 Commando Brigade, *writes Sgt Ben Perkins RM*.

Just days in I found myself sitting in the gym at Bickleigh Barracks, tuned into two full days (Royal Marines don't like full days) of lectures ranging from cultural awareness to casualty evacuation.

This was good in a way just to get back into the soldiering mindset and to update on the latest advances in Afghanistan since my previous deployment.

It was a world away from the previous weeks where I had been attending the RM PTIs* Course, which generally consisted of a morning of the hardest PT the Armed Forces has to offer and afternoons of trying to control Sgt Al Hewitt on a jet ski and enforcing run ashore countermeasures against course instructor Sgt Glynn Luke, who was out to recruit members of the course for anything that involves the potential of a beer or three.

The weeks following this weren't much different, with the spectrum of military activity taking place – and not all geared around Afghanistan as a large part of Brigade were preparing for the major Exercise Cougar.

With so much going on I was in desperate need of advice on the media, as I'm supposed to be the Brigade subject matter expert.



Luckily for me a team of crack media experts with vast experience were on their way, ranging from employment with Sky and Five News (Capt Merry Grant), a film and video production company specialising in market and brand differentiation (Maj Rolf Kurth ex-RN Lt Cdr) and the new spokesman for Task Force Helmand, Lt Col Tim Purbrick, who had worked at the Defence Press Office in London.

This was quite daunting as my qualifications of Combat Pistol Instructor, SF* Gun Line Commander, Close Combat Instructor Trainer, Long Range Rifleman, Arctic Warfare-trained, ex-RM PW2*, RM PTI, UKKA* and BWLA* Instructor and finally (the Gucciest of all) USMC* Martial Arts Instructor Trainer, would probably be about as much use as a chocolate fireguard.

Luckily for me I had been loaded on to two week-long courses at RAF Halton, the Foundation and Advanced Media Courses.

Once Capt Johnston and his team in the Training Office had been tipped off about my background, I was kindly elected as IC* Ranges/WHT*, BFTs* and CFTs* also not forgetting a lunchtime Circuit-chaser every so often.

This was great as it did get me out of the office and knowing exactly how busy the Brigade were; with the Chief of Staff regularly seen arriving long before 0700hrs and firing off his last Charlie Charlie One* email not much short of midnight, it was the least I could do in the circumstances.

With these new-found skills, we soon found ourselves embedded on the FTX* coordinating fantastic displays of military hardware doing the business in front of the nation's journalists.

Of course this was all in the programme and not staged in the slightest but I can't eyebrows* that statement.

Brief pre-deployment leave with my fiancée and daughter seemed to fly by, prior to departing in early April with two other Royal Marines, one being the Brigade Commander, Brig Ed Davis, and the Brigade Regimental Sgt Maj, Dom Collins – so no pressure.

Days before deploying I received a call on the Pusser's mobile* from the RSM: "Hello Clubs, it's the RSM, just to let you know I'll pick you up from your house at midnight Sunday to drive to Brize."

The next couple of days went as quick as a flash.

As briefed, the RSM turned up five minutes early, like every good Royal Marine should.

There followed a brief encounter with the M5 and M4 and an added ten minutes to our journey due to myself and the RSM being deeply engulfed in our own 'dits' from previous experiences in Iraq and Afghanistan.

After arriving at Brize* and looking at everyone sat to attention on the RAF's finest right-angle waiting room chairs, Brig Davis and RSM kindly gave me the offer of travelling in their party.

The flight had two stops, Germany and Cyprus, both with a hospitality room for us to drink coffee and relax where possible.



● *Pictures show Sgt Ben Perkins deployed on Operation Zamari Mundez 3 with 4 Scots, getting to know the territory and the locals in the vicinity of Patrol Base Said Abdul* Pictures: PO(Phot) Hamish Burke

Unfortunately this wasn't the case for the Brigade Commander as he was filtering through pages and pages of documents.

It felt as if we were slowly being acclimatised, with each stop increasing in temperature before we arrived in Afghanistan.

This was the last I saw of the Brigade Commander and RSM as I had an appointment with RSOI* training for a week.

RSOI was a good way to acclimatise despite hearing the Army default setting when lecturing of "Sirs, Ma'ams, Ladies and Gents" at least 100 times.

The obvious fact that struck me was that tactical soldiering had changed and adapted so much from our usual teachings of Commando Ops.

I was the only Royal and remained the grey man throughout – until one of the instructors, responsible for the Rolo Det, a machine which replicates a roll in an armoured vehicle full of personnel, from which you have to escape and rescue a casualty (relatively easy for anyone that had done the 'Dunker') revealed the story of members of J Coy requesting to participate naked, obviously out of character...

The best part of the long days had to be chilling with the rest of Royal in the Danish coffee shop just shooting the obvious.

After boarding a Chinook to 'Lash Vegas*' nothing failed to surprise me, especially the food served up by Sri Lankan chefs who could make a five-star restaurant-standard meal from a Pusser's bag rat*, without dripping like Jack on a PT session.

Speaking of PT it was great to bump into 42 Cdo's RSM Phil Gilby, who said that his unit was doing well, and Sgt Rob Driskall of 1 Troop J Coy was maintaining morale by attempting to grow the longest sideburns in Afghanistan until the RSM sanctioned their removal, whilst narrowly avoiding being dispatched to the nearest water feature.

After a small bedding-in period and witnessing the hand-over from 16 Brigade, I was quickly deployed into the Green Zone with 4 Scots, wading through lots of rivers and living in local compounds in upwards of 40 degree heat, but at the same time it was pleasantly refreshing.

I was really impressed not only with their drills and skills but also with their morale – not dissimilar to that of Royal. I was welcomed in by the guys with open arms for the duration of the op.

The remainder of Brigade back in the UK had recently been mobilised as the UK's R1* capability which had been removed from the Black Watch at last minute – which delighted everyone involved.

As it stands I am planning as much engagement with Royal Marines and their supporting units as possible, starting with the Brigade Reconnaissance Force, which hopefully will help highlight the assets that 30 Cdo has to offer and the fact that the unit now stands shoulder-to-shoulder with the likes of 45 Cdo and 42 Cdo.

The next engagement is with C-IED* teams from the UK, Denmark and, crucially, Afghanistan to clear an area responsible for three Coalition KIAs*.

The whole organisation has a very purple feel to it with a complete mixture and even distribution of all three Services.

It does become hard to avoid being biased with so many different cap badges requiring media coverage but this is the great thing about having a media team that can manage the battlespace in such a way that each member of the team plays to their specific strengths – and as the only Royal in the team, being out on the ground is by far my most productive environment.

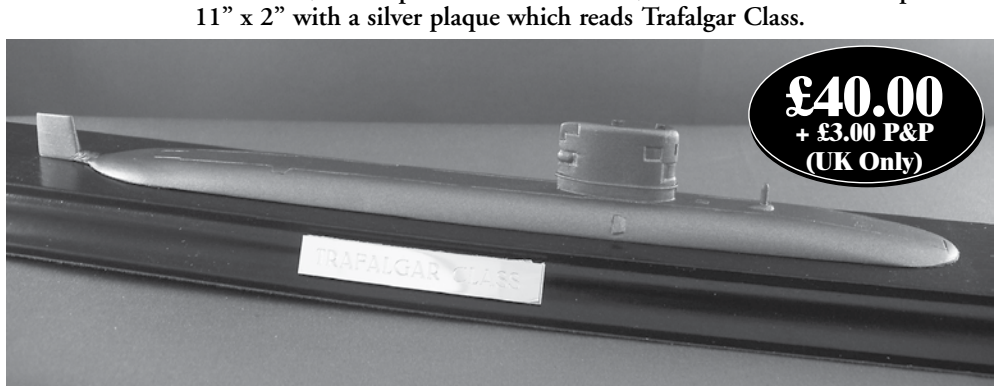
Brigade phot PO Hamish Burke has already seen the majority of the Area of Operations, spending an average of only 24-48 hours at a time on MOB* Lashkar Gar.

The atmospherics have been good so far with the usual small hurdles along the way, but the vibe is very much transition, which is being embraced by the Afghans who are now regularly planning and leading their own operations with little to no input from ISAF.

From my perspective this is great in that it is paving the way for our exit from Afghanistan – meaning Royal can return to Med trips, exercises in America and regular Arctic and jungle warfare deployments in preparation for whatever is around the next corner, whether it be By Sea or By Land – *Per Mare Per Terram*.

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*Instant guide to Royalspeak

BFTs/CFTs: Basic/Combat Fitness Tests
Brize: RAF Brize Norton
BWLA: British Weight Lifters' Association
Charlie Charlie One: A communication to everyone
C-IED: Counter Improvised Explosive Devices
Drip: To complain or moan about something
Eyebrows: To eyebrows a fact is to aver it is true – you offer your eyebrows to be shaved off if it is false.
FTX: Final Training Exercise
IC: In charge (of)
Lash Vegas: Lashkar Gar
KIA: Killed in action
MOB: Main Operating Base
PTI: Physical Training Instructor – 'Clubs'
Pusser's bag rat: Bag meal on ops ('bag rations')
Pusser's mobile: Military mobile phone
PW2: Platoon/Company weapons instructor
R1: Very high readiness (to deploy operationally)
RSOI: Reception, Staging, Onward movement and Integration
SF: Sustained Fire (Gun Line Commander)
UKKA: UK Kettlebell Association
USMC: United States Marine Corps
WHT: Weapon Handling Test

Postcards from York

THAT'S the ship, rather than the historic northern city (hence no minster or stone walls)...

After the bulk of her deployment around the Falklands, the Portsmouth-based destroyer shifted oceans to the Pacific to begin a leisurely – and at times quite photogenic – seven-and-a-half-week passage back to Blighty.

HMS York's first challenge was a safe transit of the Magellan Strait and Patagonian Canals taking her from the Atlantic to the Pacific.

Two Chilean Naval pilots embarked for two and a half days of 'interesting' and 'challenging' navigation…

York's Navigator Lt Tim Langford put his extensive planning into practice with extra sailors closed up for the entire passage at critical areas around the ship – the bridge, cable party and steering gear compartment.

For particularly narrow bits there were also extra sailors manning the engine rooms and machinery control room.

Meanwhile for those not closed up, the passage afforded some of the most stunning views known to seafarers on the planet.

And while negotiating the canals, Chile celebrated Naval Day – a national holiday commemorating victory at the Battle of Iquique in 1879. With two Chilean pilots aboard it was only right and proper that the event was marked with a winter warmer on the bridge wing with toasts and speeches.

Having landed the pilots, York headed north for the second of her homeward-bound challenges. After a week or so at sea she met two Chilean vessels some 60 miles out into the Pacific Ocean for a Replenishment at Sea (RAS).

It's thought to be the first time in a decade that a British ship has taken supplies from a Chilean tanker (in this case CNS Almirante Montt), which was simultaneously RASing with Almirante Williams – formerly Type 22 frigate HMS Sheffield.

The Chileans do things much as we do – their Navy's modelled to a considerable degree on the Senior Service and a good few Chilean sailors have 'enjoyed' the experience of Operational Sea Training off Plymouth.

And some things they do differently. Like blasting rock music across the upper deck during the middle of the fuel transfer…

With 350,000 litres of fuel – nearly 77,000 gallons or enough to fill the tanks of 6,300 Ford Focuses – transferred to York during the 80-minute RAS, the destroyer staged a fast steam past of the two Chilean vessels to show her gratitude before resuming her journey north.

"Recognising that a Type 42 Destroyer needs a regular pit stop, the Chilean Navy were nothing but excellent from the moment the request for this RAS was submitted," said York's CO Cdr Simon Staley.

"It was an extremely slick and professional connection and transfer of some 350,000 litres of fuel from the impressive tanker. There was a real sense of pride and camaraderie throughout the three-hour evolution.

"Perhaps the most poignant element of the day has been the interaction with the terrifically smart and well-handled CNS Almirante Williams, formally known as HMS Sheffield.

"With the decommissioning of our own Type 22 fleet in the UK, and the progressive withdrawal from service of the Type 42 destroyer as the Type 45s come on line, in conducting a simultaneous RAS today it has probably been the last time the two classes of ship will ever operate together."

Next stop Callao in Peru for a four-day break. On arrival there were the all-important official calls carried out by the captain as he paid courtesy visits to senior Peruvian officers, whose port authority laid on buses for the ship's company so they could move between the harbour and the sights of nearby Lima.

A dozen officers from the Peruvian Naval Academy visited York for a discussion about dealing with the scourge of drug-running at sea and, on a less serious note, some 40 youngsters from Lima orphanage Casa Wasi Warmi were entertained with a tea party and a tour of the ship.

On sailing from Callao, York spent a day in company with the veteran Peruvian frigate BAP Montero. Several Yorkies sailed aboard the Montero and six Peruvians, well you get the picture.

A busy day of RAS approaches, flag signals and flashing light exercises as well as some boarding training and a double round of flying (York's Lynx and Montero's Huey) ensued.

Throughout, Peru's Admiral Calderon was onboard as were a team from Peruvian newspaper *El Comercio*.

Exercises complete, the Montero bore away and York made for Panama. The short passage concluded with a forecastle barbecue – conducted in true British fashion with hungry sailors queuing in the rain for their burgers – and a night of 'Go Fast' racing (a spin on the traditional horse racing but using drug-runner fast boat models) hosted by the Petty Officers' Mess which raised £750 for the ship's charity, while riding at anchor off Panama City.

So to the world's greatest man-made waterway. It takes ten hours to cover the 77 kilometres from the Pacific to the Caribbean, where York emerged and switched to counter-narcotics duties as she made for Kingston, Jamaica.

On the way her 815 NAS Lynx was scrambled to search for a suspected drugs boat – but sadly nothing was found.

The destroyer arrived in the Jamaican capital to find tanker RFA Wave Knight, Britain's current counter-narcotics warrior, in port, taking a breather from her search for drug-runners.

Pretty much any run ashore is enjoyed by Jack and Jenny, but this one went down particularly well with LStd Silma Whitely who hails from Westmoreland, a stone's throw (in the grand scheme of things) from Kingston.

"Since joining the Navy eight years ago this is the first time I have returned home in a warship. It was really exciting – all of my family came to see the ship and have a look around. They were as excited as I was," she said.

Equally excitable were a group of children at the Christian Boys Home, a local orphanage whose surroundings are a little brighter thanks to a lick of paint inside and some elbow grease in the garden despite the blistering Caribbean temperatures.

Twenty-two sailors from York spent the day at the home, while 32 youngsters headed in the opposite direction to tour the Type 42 and enjoy a party aboard.

Fannie Knight, the 103-year-old (yes, really) director of the home said: "I feel very good about getting the help, and the boys were so excited about going on the ship."

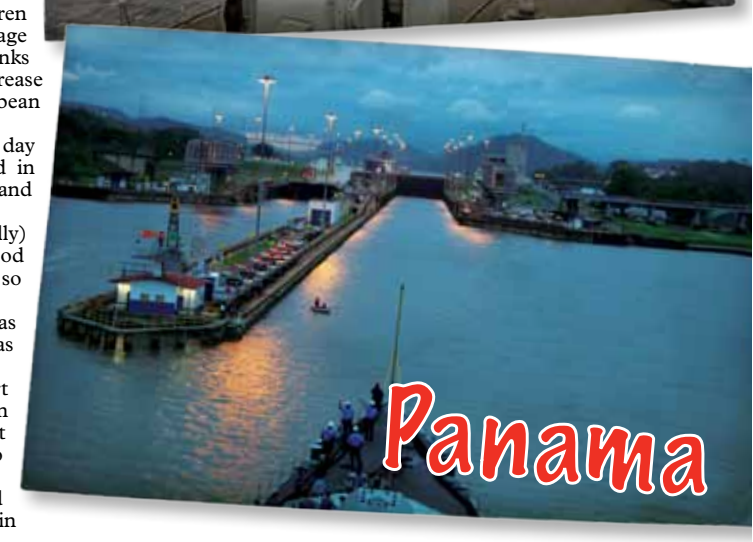
NA(AC) Jon Forbes added: "Everyone has enjoyed taking part in this project and has found it very rewarding."

Having packed such a lot into a short space of time, HMS York left Kingston in company with RFA Wave Ruler to conduct her last deployment RAS allowing her to top up prior to her final leg homeward.

After stops in Key West, Bermuda and the Azores, the Fastest 42 is due home in Portsmouth on July 8.







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● *The unmistakable curvaceous lines of a Russian submarine – in this case the Kilo-class boat Alrosa, making a rare appearance on the surface off Spain; it's the first time a Russian boat has participated in the rescue exercise*

The botton

MORE than 2,000 sailors from 13 nations took part in the largest rescue exercise ever staged as they tried to 'save' hundreds of submariners 'trapped' in four boats on the seabed of the Mediterranean. **RICHARD HARGREAVES** reports from NATO's Exercise Bold Monarch.

THE meaning of life is 42. Three is the magic number.

But for submariners three other figures matter: seven, 72 and 1,006.

Seven is the maximum number of days you'll survive if your boat is stuck on the bottom of the ocean. Seventy-two is the maximum number of hours you can expect NATO's rescue submarine to reach you. And 1,006? That's the number of ships in the world which can carry the impressive – and large – rescue system.

Make that 1,005, for one of those is in use right now.

Some 20 miles off the southeastern tip of Spain, the KL Sandefjord hovers in glassy waters. Some 200 metres away is the Spanish submarine Galena. She's also 114 metres down and in need of help.

Galena's one of four boats 'bottomed' in the western Mediterranean, awaiting their saviours in the world's largest submarine rescue exercise.

Two thousand sailors from 13 nations converged on waters between Cartagena and Alicante for Bold Monarch, the NATO-led exercise held every three years to test the ability of the world's submarining nations to help deeps in distress.

Portugal, host nation Spain, Turkey and, for the first time, Russia (prompting much excitement among organisers) provided diesel boats needing rescue.

Coming to their aid are mini-submarines, diving bells, divers, parachutists and medical experts from across the globe, among them NATO's Faslane-based Submarine Rescue System.

The team running the latter – the RN oversees it, but it's actually run by Rolls-Royce – keep tabs on the 1,006 vessels which can accommodate the cumbersome kit: one mini submersible (Nemo), launching system, plus a container 'hospital' complex and several workshops.

Most of the suitable ships – VOOs, or 'vessels of opportunity' – are oil rig support vessels, chiefly located in northern European waters, the Gulf, off Mexico, plus a handful in the Mediterranean.

In this instance, the NATO team have plumped for the Sandefjord, not a bad choice indeed: a brand-new Norwegian vessel with quite possibly the largest (and plushest – wooden flooring, coffee machine, sofa in the corner) bridge on the planet and a huge working deck for the entire NATO Submarine Rescue System.

The rear of the Sandefjord's bridge provides a wonderful bird's eye view of the system: at the stern a huge orange crane to launch the Thunderbird 5-esque rescue submarine Nemo. Behind that a two-deck container complex, the 'transfer under pressure' centre where stricken submariners can be treated for decompression illnesses.

Further back still, a couple of small white capsules – they look very much like the craft from the fledgling days of the Space Race – which can be used to carry submariners needing substantial medical attention to hospital in a pressurised environment.

And all around the deck there are more containers: generators and workshops.

It's taken two dozen lorries and seven giant transport aircraft to shift the entire 350-tonne system from its home in Faslane to the back of the Sandefjord.

THE whole kit and caboodle is expected to be over the rescue site within 72 hours. It's not the task of the system to find the sunken submarine, merely to rescue its trapped crew.

The latter have at best seven days, at worst five, before time runs out.

All four boats in this exercise are conventional diesel craft, sitting on the bottom of the Mediterranean at depths of 80-120 metres; you don't 'bottom' nuclear boats because (a) the shape of their hulls means they might roll and (b) the reactor needs constant cooling with sea water and you don't want to clog the intakes up with all the gunk you might find on the seabed. (There are plans to tether Astute to four buoys under Loch Goil next year and carry out a rescue exercise to prove that you can escape from an A-boat should the need arise.)

'Bottoming' a boat isn't natural and certainly isn't a lot of fun for the crews. The submarines spend up to two days at a time on the seabed during the exercise.

"All you can really do is sit or lie down – keep movement to a minimum to reduce oxygen use and CO2 production. It's very, very tedious," says Cdr Steve Drysdale, who's just about to take over as the senior RN/NATO submarine rescue staff officer.

But there is a plus side if you're one of the several hundred souls on the bottom of the ocean for Bold Monarch.

"You go through the training, you talk about escape as a submariner, but to do this for real, to prove that rescue works, to show the guys you can link up at 120 metres down, that's a real boost."

Sitting some 114 metres down today is the Galena, a Spanish boat, normally based just a few miles away in Cartagena.

Communication with the 'sunken' boat comes courtesy of an underwater telephone – basically a loudspeaker pumping the words of Lt Cdr Stewart Little, the rescue commander, through the water.

Depending on other noise (ie engines) in the area, the water should carry soundwaves a good 1,000 metres.

You do have to speak in a deliberate, rather halting fashion and, after a few seconds, between the bursts of static, a distorted, yet audible response.

"Sandefjord, Sandefjord, this is Galena…"

This is how the two would communicate for real. It would be down to Lt Cdr Little to determine the rescue plan, taking advice from his medical experts, divers, and the boat.

How many people are on board? How many are injured? Where are they? What is the pressure?

With the plan determined, it's time to send down the rescue submersible.

Nemo has two pilots who occupy the 'command module' – the bit at the front with the bulbous window and a blistering array of dials, switches, consoles, buttons.

Behind that is the rescue chamber – the two parts can be sealed off with a hatch – where a diver is in charge of the link-up with the sunken submarine and



n (life) line









looking after the rescuees.

A tiny window is the diver's only view of the boat below, but he and the pilots are expected to 'mate' Nemo with the submarine to an accuracy of 25mm.

Once mated, there's a 15-minute 'cooling off' period to make sure everything's safe before the hatch is opened and hands of friendship are extended.

It is far from spacious in Nemo. Imagine being in the back of a Jungly Sea King, then half the amount of space. You sit, your head bowed slightly, on two benches barely 12in apart.

To claustrophobia add humidity (15 sweaty submariners) and the ambient temperature – dictated by the water temperature, so cold in Norway, rather warm here off Spain.

The actual rescue, says Lt Cdr Little, is "mostly down to common sense and experience". But, as the rescue commander, he also bears a heavy moral burden.

"There can be instances where you have to decide who comes out first. The submarine can only carry 15 people – or just two men on stretchers. If time or the weather is against you, do you save just the two, or the 15..."

Or in this case none.

Today Nemo is out-of-action which is a bit of a bummer as we were due to dive on the Galena and particularly galling as the Beeb are having a lovely time on the Russian boat Alrosa 100 metres down after docking with a US rescue vehicle.

But the snags with Nemo (fixed just as we depart the Sandefjord, Murphy's law) also reinforce the words of Cdr Charlie Neve, the NATO/ Fleet staff officer responsible for submarine rescue: "A single nation on its own probably cannot do submarine rescue on its own."

Indeed, were this for real, it would be down to the overall rescue co-ordinator to arrange for a succession of rescue vehicles – submersibles and diving chambers – to take it in turns to 'mate' (ie dock) with the sunken boat and save stricken submariners from their grim predicament.

"On this exercise we've proved we can mate four different rescue vehicles on four different submarines from four different nations," said Lt Cdr Little.

"We have proved that we can get 70 people out of a boat in under 24 hours and that covers pretty much every non-nuclear submarine in the world."

GETTING a submariner out of a sunken boat is, if not the easy bit, the rescue only half completed.

"If water gets into a boat, then the pressure rises," explains Lt Cdr Little. "And if the pressure rises, then the men will suffer."

Once back on the surface and back in its cradle, Nemo can be attached to the back of the other half of the NATO system, the 'transfer under pressure' (TUP) complex. It is, concedes former bomber commander and now rescue system manager Jonty Powis, "not as sexy as the rescue submarine, but just as important."

Once inside, the deeps are stripped of their clothes (which could be contaminated), washed down, and then receive fresh clean apparel.

Now their decompression can begin, moving downstairs into two chambers mirrored on either side of the complex, each with enough space for 30 men.

Beyond that there's a special treatment chamber for half a dozen submariners requiring medical assistance; they'll be accompanied in there by a specialist medic.

If a casualty's condition worsens or his injuries are too severe for the rescue team, he can be transferred into that 'Apollo capsule', feet first on a stretcher, with an attendant at his side.

"It's a bit confining," says Lt Cdr Iain Beck RCN – the Royal Navy's penchant for understatement has evidently crossed the Atlantic – of the capsule having tried it out during an exercise. "But then submariners are used to living in small spaces.

"As an attendant, you can alleviate pain, help casualties with their breathing, but if their condition worsens then we have to transfer to a hospital with a special treatment facility."

The TUP is run from a mission-control-esque container on the top floor. Inside are French and Royal Navy divers (the latter courtesy of Northern Diving Group in Faslane).

Each chamber is controlled by a diver who can talk with the 'inmates', watch what's going on via rather jerky CCTV and monitor oxygen, carbon dioxide and pressure levels among other readings.

Neither Britons nor Frenchmen (the rescue system is an Anglo-French-Norwegian venture although the latter are largely absent on this exercise) have met before Bold Monarch, but they're thrust into this very compact cubicle and expected to carry out a difficult task.

Oh, and then there's the language barrier.

"Our French isn't that good – but we can say '*Bonjour*'," admits Lt Cdr Kev Stockton, CO of Northern Diving Group.

"Actually, we get on really well. Of course, the fact that we're better looking does cause a few problems..."

Cue eyebrow raised Roger Moore-fashion by Cdr Hubert Vatbois, Lt Cdr Stockton's Gallic counterpart...

"Divers have a natural affinity and this exercise shows that you can put a multinational team together, you can work the system, you can overcome barriers," Lt Cdr Stockton continues.

In a real rescue, the divers could be operating 'mission control' for several days – decompression could be as quick as four hours, as long as three days in serious cases.

Food can be supplied to the rescuees, books and magazines too, there are showers and heads in the pressurised complex.

"Boredom can be a problem, but at the end of the day they were on a stricken submarine and now they've been rescued," Lt Cdr Stockton adds .

Fair point.

"This is a great exercise for us," says Lt Cdr Beck, a senior submarine medical adviser in the Royal Canadian Navy. "My message is that this is the system to use.

"We don't have one like this ourselves. The submarine is really cool, but this complex is just as important – if you cannot transfer people, then there's no point."

That's a point stressed time and again by anyone connected with the project. Nemo might be 'cool', it might be the object which attracts photographers and cameramen like moths around a light, but it's 'merely' an ambulance. And an ambulance isn't really much use without a hospital...

This is the second run out for the NATO system this year. It was flown to Norway *en masse* for the first time a few months ago.

With Bold Monarch over, the kit will be returned to its shed at Faslane, where it and the 50 or so people who support it remain at 24 hours' notice to move. Fingers crossed, it will never have to for real.

"This is the first job in the Navy where I hope that I never have to put my training into practice – it's a job that you don't want to have to do," says Cdr Drysdale.

pictures: po(phot) des wade, northwood, mc2 ricardo reyes, usn, and christian torrecillas



pictures: la(phot) stuart hill





Deliverance f

HANGING on a wire above a storm-tossed ship, hoping to avoid getting caught in the rigging as the wind howls around you.

Holding a helicopter in a hover with the tips of the rotor just feet from a rock face.

Creeping up a cloud-filled valley, working out the chances of a gap in the mist allowing you to fly over a ridge into another valley which may be clear. Or it may not.

And all this is regarded by Navy flyers as a 'respite' tour, a welcome break from the bullets, bombs and grenades of Afghanistan...

That says quite a lot about the calibre of pilot in the Navy – and it certainly adds to the capabilities of what has been the UK's busiest search and rescue (SAR) unit for the past four years, and first or second busiest for the past decade.

There is more to HMS Gannet than just the SAR flight – but as it is at the heart of HMS Gannet, we may as well start there.

Lt Cdr Craig Sweeney has been with the operational unit since February, and will shortly change from Ops Officer ("which means I write the roster and get the leave I want...") to Executive Officer.

'Sweenos' knows the value of Gannet as a respite tour as he has racked up plenty of flying time in Afghanistan (and Iraq and Bosnia before that) with the Junglies of the Commando Helicopter Force (CHF).

"We plan the crew compositions two or three months in advance, which means for CHF it's a stabilisation job – back with the families in a nice, stable environment," he said.

Sweenos' path to Gannet demonstrates one of the unit's other roles, taking some of the training burden from the RN's other SAR unit, 771 Naval Air Squadron, based at Culdrose in Cornwall (and gaining valuable flying hours into the bargain).

On leaving Afghanistan Sweenos did a short conversion, from Sea King Mk 4 (Junglie) to Mk 5 (SAR), but then did the majority of his training in Scotland.

"You might as well train in the environment you are going to work in," he said.

"In my experience this is not so much about flying skills, it's about local knowledge – and most of the pilots here have in excess of 1,500 hours anyway.

"We have got the flying skills here – you just need the local knowledge as well."

HMS Gannet's CO, Lt Cdr Debdash Bhattacharya, who has also served with 771 NAS, agrees: "The big difference to me is the mountains.

"In Cornwall we might have to operate on cliffs perhaps 200-300ft high. On Ben Nevis we are operating at altitudes of 3,000-4,000ft with cliffs that are over 2,000ft high."

Junglie pilots would relish the extra challenges that Gannet offers – indeed, for Sweenos it was the last major tick in the box.

"I have done the desert, I have done Norway, I have operated with troops, operated under fire, and I have operated from ships both large and small," he said.

MIKE GRAY went to the Ayrshire coast to find out more about 'the Fleet Air Arm's best-kept secret' – HMS Gannet, home of the UK's busiest search and rescue unit

"For me, this was the last big challenge I wanted to achieve."

Flying from a ship usually means a well-planned mission with well-established profiles and margins, he said.

But with SAR – like Afghanistan – it is often down to the crew of four when in the thick of it.

"And some things can be life-changing experiences – how far you push the fuel margins and so on.

"Here, it's a telephone call and you go, often with very little information – you get that *en route*.

"You have a heading to steer and a height, but you do not really know what you have got till you get there.

"The handling pilot always has the ultimate say, but there is a little more to it here.

"The observer and crewman really drive what they want you to be doing up front.

"You are looking at the power margins and the like, but the crewman is the one who has got to get out and go down the cliff face, and they will want to know how you are going to get them out again.

"There could well be lots of discussion before we go against a cliff face and commit ourselves and, more importantly, the aircraft."

Of course, SAR work has gained a higher profile in recent times because of a certain Royal pilot at RAF Valley, 150-odd miles south of Gannet.

"He really is in the thick of it," said Sweenos.

"It doesn't matter how experienced you are, you can get in an awful lot of trouble. We all bleed in the same way.

"It's just a shame that he's in a yellow aircraft. Perhaps if he was a better pilot he would be in a red-and-grey one...

"But it's a dangerous job to be in, and they wouldn't let him fly if he wasn't up to it.

"If he touches the tips on a cliff face they all get hurt."

The helicopters used are very much in the veteran category, but are well-regarded by the air crew.

"The Sea King is old but working technology, and it doesn't let us down in the main," said Sweenos.

"Doctors and paramedics like it because you have got great working space in the back to lay a patient down flat.

"She's a good old aircraft. Mountain rescue teams say she doesn't produce as much downdraft as other aircraft, which is obviously important if you are clinging to a cliff face.

"And the rotor diameter of the Sea King allows you to get closer to a cliff face.

"She is a good, very capable airframe. She may be limited in a few areas, but she can do a lot more than other aircraft in certain environments.

"And she is quite a forgiving aircraft. She becomes very much a part of the team – you get the feeling she digs out for you as well."

The SAR flight is at the heart of HMS Gannet, and there is a crew of four on duty every minute of every day of the year, on 15 minutes' notice to move by day (8am to 10pm) and 45 minutes' notice by night, giving them a chance to get their heads down.

The aircraft is kept in the 'cocked position' – initial cockpit checks are done when the crew takes over, leaving only two buttons to push to start the engines when they are called out on a mission.

"On average, by day we can get off the ground in as little as eight minutes, and always aim to get up as quickly as safety will permit," said Lt Cdr Bhattacharya.

"We do not cut corners – but the sooner we can get off the ground the sooner we can get to the scene.

"We generate two aircraft per day so we have always got a spare.

"We have three aircraft on site, and we fly about 500 hours a year in each.

"Rescue work is our bread and butter, but we also have Fleet tasking, such as Flag Officer Sea Training serials for minor war vessels, we work with submarines including transferring personnel, and compassionate transfers from naval vessels at sea."

There is a pattern to the SAR year – skiers and climbers in the peaks in the winter, followed by a lull before the climbers and hikers become prominent from Easter onwards. September to November is generally a quieter time, but with 379 call-outs (and 324 lives 'assisted') in 2010 'quieter' can still mean busy.

The figures are down on the previous year (447 call-outs, 378 assists) because of a better filtering system, whereby land-based services are used where appropriate.

"I wouldn't say we are bored here – on average we have more than one call-out per day," said Lt Cdr Bhattacharya.

"When on duty you will always plan a training flight, so you would be airborne for two hours a day – instrument flying, night flying, winching roles, operating in the mountains, it all has to be done.

"I trained as an anti-submarine warfare [ASW] Sea King pilot – 814, 820, 810 C Flight, 706 (very briefly), then back to 771 A Flight, 771 proper, then here.

"This is the best job I have ever had in the Navy, without a doubt.

"It is operation flying as although no one is shooting at you, you are going out in the worst weather to the most inhospitable places.

"I think that is why Junglies like this role so much –it is so attractive to them because they continue to perform at a high tempo and they are using thir bread-and-butter skills here."

Such transfer and sharing of skills was recognised as best practice when the RN model was offered as the way ahead for the military component of the future SAR organisation, a project which is currently on ice.

And while Lt Cdr Bhattacharya appreciates that the Sea King community tends to gravitate towards the south-west of England, he feels they may be missing out on something.

"Gannet, in that respect, has always been known as the best-kept secret in the Fleet Air Arm, but once they come here they love it because of the flying."

A SAR mission usually starts with a phone call, at which the pilot and engineers will rush out to flash up the aircraft while the co-pilot, observer and crewman meet in the SAR Ops Room to consider what information they have.

"If it's a place we do not know, we will have a look at it – we have got a piece of string with ten-mile marks on it on our planning board to give us an idea of where we are going," said Sweenos.

"Ben Nevis is a common job, but out to the east I would maybe need a closer look, which might only take 10-20 seconds.

"The bottom line is that we are at 15 minutes notice, but if the weather is bad you can get in a worse position by not having a plan.

"The crew would convene and have a quick discussion – better to have a rough plan in our heads to save time and fuel."

"At night, on 45 minutes' notice it is the same, but we have got to get up, so we look everybody in the eyes and make sure everybody is really functioning.

"But probably at night it's no more than 30 minutes from call to being airborne."

rom the skies

Even a simple call-out may be the start of a gruelling session.

Around 80 per cent of the call-outs are after 1600, when most people's working day is ending, and because the area Gannet covers stretches from Ben Nevis in the north to the Lake District anhd Isle of Man in the south, and west across Northern Ireland and the Hebrides to 200 miles off the coast (five times the size of Wales), they may 'bounce' from task to task as they are closer to an incident once airborne.

This means a relatively straightforward job may turn into a six-hour extravaganza.

The Gannet Sea King's call sign is Navy 177, but when on a mercy dash it changes to Rescue 177, prompting air traffic controllers at Prestwick and Glasgow to do their utmost to clear a path, particularly in the case of a 'category A' or life-or-death mission.

"There's a very very good working relationship here – as soon as we transmit that our rotors are turning, and that we are outbound to Glasgow, Prestwick controllers will have spoken to Glasgow and got clearance through their airspace."

Vital to their missions is the work of Professors Fog – the duty met men on the station.

"It is quite testing in terms of forecasting," said Lt Cdr Bhattacharya.

"In the mountains you get hill effects, and this far north the weather can turn from temperate to Arctic very quickly.

"I don't think we ever get airborne thinking that a mission is going to be easy – expect the worst and you may be pleasantly surprised.

"A 20-knot wind down here might be a lot more turbulent in the mountains, and flying there will be all the more hazardous because of up and down-draughts.

"Often the trickiest part of a mission is getting to it.

"In poor weather this may necessitate scooting along a number of valleys just below the cloudbase to get to the scene of SAR.

"However, you always approach the jobs at at sea with trepidation.

"A small vessel pitching and rolling on a high sea state is one of the most difficult missions.

"There are a lot of hazards, and the danger to the winchman is particularly evident at sea.

"In the mountains the danger is to everyone, but at sea we can hover at 60ft, out of trouble, but we could slam the man on the wire against the side of the vessel or tangle him in the rigging.

"Even in missions like a straightforward medical transfer the weather has a lot to say.

"Can we go in a straight line? Can we get fuel on the way?

"We have a radius of action of 200 miles for our Sea Kings, whioch have a range of about 400 nautical miles, and because Scotland is such a large area the SAR force as a whole has a number of remote refuelling field sites – a tank with a pump; just land on, refuel, and let Kinloss [the UK Aeronautical Rescue Coordination Centre or ARCC at RAF Kinloss] know so they can have it topped up again.

"Airfields are few and far between – for example, on Barra the airfield is a beach that is only open at low tide."

With the weather playing such a crucial role, Gannet has a duty forecaster round the clock, either



● *Lt Cdr Debdash Bhattacharya*

in Colonsay Building on site (regularly putting in 12 or 14-hour days) or at 45 minutes' notice.

CPO Tim Anthoney was the Senior Met Officer (SMETO) on the day I visited.

"Gannet is one of the best airfields for weather," he said.

"We cover about 98,000 square miles, so it is a big area, but for day-to-day it is 100 nautical miles out.

"We have no top cover here, and nowhere else, apart from perhaps Afghanistan, do we do low-level operational forecasting for mountains."

Outside the 100-mile range the air crew can be given a tailored forecast, and the SMETO can also call on a treasury of tips on local mountain conditions which has been collated over the years.

The forecasters do not dictate – they can only offer advice.

"They do not ignore us – they just take on the risk," said CPO Anthoney.

"It's the captain's decision, with input from other members of the crew, because a forecast is only a best guess – they will go out there then they can suck it and see.

"If they feel they are pushing their luck they could put it down on the deck, shut down and wait and see.

"Or maybe the cloud is 100ft higher than we predicted, and they could pop over into a valley which is clear.

"And they can almost always get back in here because the weather is okay – they can fly down the coast and it is usually clear here.

"Mind you, I wouldn't like to do the job they do, dangling off the end of a wire against a cliff. They earn their money..."

By way of another string to their bow, the busy unit also provides shipping forecasts for Clyde inshore and offshore waters, and for the whole of the RN and RM defence estate in Scotland.

It is not just the weather the station has to deal with – the Icelandic ash cloud of last spring gave HMS Gannet the chance to show its versatility.

Not only did Rescue 177 become one of the very few aircraft operating during the shut-down of UK airspace (a seriously-ill woman was flown from Scotland to central London for treatment), but the SAR flight's second hangar was also shared by a squadron of Harriers which had to leave HMS Ark Royal at short notice as the carrier was put on standby to rescue stranded tourists in Spain.

So that is the SAR unit – plucking mariners to safety, ferrying patients to hospital from the islands, acting as an 'eye in the sky', searching for missing people, supporting the Fleet and training air crew.

Five four-strong SAR crews account for 20 per cent of HMS Gannet's complement of 102, of which the majority (76) are civilian.

They all have a vital role to play in both the SAR unit and Gannet's other guises, that of forward operating base (mainly for Merlin ASW helicopters, though Gannet recently hosted the NATO Submarine Rescue team and all their kit) and a nuclear accident response organisation.

Almost half the complement are engineers – many former RN or RAF personnel – and the vein of military knowledge runs deep, typified by the station's First Lieutenant (and Security Officer and Budget Manager and Equality and Diversity Manager etc etc) Tom Hutchinson, an ex-pusser with more than 34 years in the Navy, from watchkeeper on nuclear submarines to flight deck officer on Leanders.

Lt Cdr Bhattacharya said the station can only function because of the team spirit of the tight-knit workforce, from the MOD Guard Service protecting the perimeter to the air crew themselves.

Everyone mucks in to welcome visitors – in one year Gannet hosted detachments from four Merlin squadrons, two Sea King squadrons, Jetstreams and HS 125s (all planned), Hawks, Ark Royal's Harriers *(see below right)* and Tornadoes (diverts).

That, in broad terms, is what HMS Gannet is all about. But some readers will have spotted something – or someone – is missing.

In recent years no Gannet story would be complete without a mention of media star PO Marcus 'Wiggy' Wigfull, award-winning winchman *extraordinaire*.

I fully intended to quiz Wiggy on his 13 years with SAR (800 call-outs, 624 people rescued) and his position as the public face of the unit, but events kept conspiring against us.

He had recently helped organise the Party in the Hangar, a gathering of local rescue and emergency services with which the SAR unit works (including mountain rescue and the Coastguard), raising more than £3,000 for charity.

Wiggy had the task of escorting three members of the Scottish version of Girls Aloud (Girls RLoud, who performed at the Party) for some publicity shots.

Then there was the afternoon met briefing.

Then the phone went, the Sea King was flashed up, and Wiggy – with Lt Cdr Bhattacharya, Sweenos and observer Lt Cdr Dave Reese – roared off in the direction of Islay to search for an injured hiker.

Maybe next time...



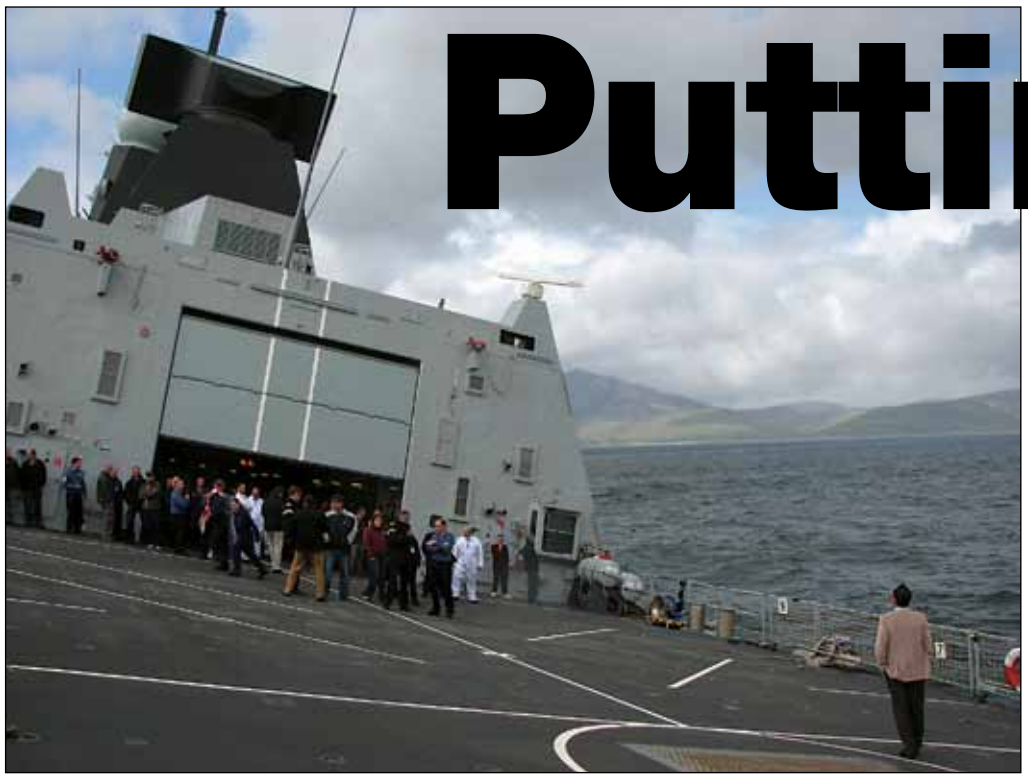








Putting the wa





● *Anti-clockwise from above: Dragon heels over during high-speed turns off the Isle of Arran; Dragon's 'signature' which will adorn her bows until the end of the year; ship's company, contractors and guests brace themselves against a 12º heel as the ship approaches 30 knots; Dragon off Scotland during the second phase of her sea trials; the Type 45 destroyer pictured from the Erskine Bridge on her way downriver to sea trials in the Firth of Clyde; Dragon during the second phase of her sea trials off the Clyde; Dragon on trials in the Firth of Clyde*

Pictures: BAE Systems and Mike Gray



FOR a stealth ship, Dragon is way off the mark, *writes Mike Gray*.

It's not her angles, which are designed to reduce her profile on enemy sensors to that of a small fishing boat.

It's not her paint job, which on a grey spring morning allows her to blend in with sea and sky.

It's the enormous motif that adorns her bows – a blood-red dragon *passant* proclaiming the name of the Type 45 destroyer as well as her principal affiliations.

The motif, first mooted by builder BAE Systems for her launch on the Clyde in November 2008, has become a popular feature on the ship, which is in the latter stages of her second and final phase of sea trials in the Firth of Clyde, some 18 days in all.

But the dragon stayed put for the trials, and is likely to still be in place when the ship makes her delivery voyage to Portsmouth at the end of the summer – and even when she visits her affiliated city of Cardiff towards the end of the year.

New members of the ship's company have their picture taken in front of the dragon; one senior rate took it a stage further.

"PO Taff Bryant joined last summer, and he joined dressed in a dragon costume," said WO2 Robbie Roberts, the ship's weapon systems manager.

"He was seen cycling along the street in Glasgow in the costume..."

The motif helps the fourth Type 45 – and the first of the Batch 2s – foster a sense of identity as she undertakes the protracted process of transfer from civilian shipyard to fighting machine.

The dark blue cohort of the ship's company on the VIP trials day had almost reached 60, with the remainder of the 220 or so being BAE workers and contractors.

When she finally sails under the White Ensign, HMS Dragon will have a complement of 190, with spare capacity for up to 70 Royal Marines.

If necessary, on humanitarian operations, the ship could in theory accommodate up to 700 people.

Though she may look identical to her three older sisters (dragon excepted), she has benefited from the two parallel improvement programmes that are built into modern shipbuilding projects.

The Royal Navy has been operating HM ships Daring and Dauntless for some months (HMS Diamond has commissioned but is yet to start operational sea training), and has been feeding information back to BAE which will help tweak the final three ships of the six-strong class.

New systems, software and equipment have also been factored into the build programme.

And BAE has been learning from its own yards' feedback loops, refining the build process to the extent that there has been a 30 per cent improvement in efficiency between Ship 1 (HMS Daring) and Ship 6 (Duncan).

The VIP trials day off Largs was something of a hiatus in proceedings – various interested parties were ferried out to the ship to see just what she can do.

Up to that point the trials programme had been exacting and – in the case of Dragon – very satisfying.

"The first set of trials was all about settling down the main machinery and getting the propulsion system working, as well as hotel services," said the ship's Weapon Engineer Officer, Cdr Peter Frankham.

"That's all shaken out, the radar is switched on, and some advanced combat system work carried out.

"And we fired all the guns to make sure all worked okay.

"For the second part of the trials, including today, we shake down all the machinery again but then very quickly get into making sure the combat system works, make sure all the kit talks to each other – all the communications equipment is correct and all the software is set properly.

"It is a huge amount of work – every single line and digit of code is checked.

"It is very much an engineering project; marine engineering first and now combat system engineering.

"It is all part of putting the war into warship.

"And when we get that correct we have to fit the crew into it, to make sure they get the most out of the ship.

"We will start operating and maintaining the kit.

"After this we go alongside on the Clyde, store ship, hand over documents and so on and gradually take it on.

"Then we have the delivery voyage to Portsmouth, then the Blue Ensign comes down and the White Ensign goes up."

As Dragon sharpened her claws off the Isle of Arran, various boats and ships were co-opted into the process – though they didn't realise it.

"Part of the trials is checking that equipment such as the electro-optical sensors and weapons are aligned," said WO Roberts.

"So lots of 'targets of opportunity' – ferries and fishing boats – are being tracked."

Once again the benefits of trials in earlier ships is being felt, such as the addition of an extra chiller in the ops room to keep temperatures down – similar equipment will be retro-fitted to earlier ships.

"We have the same capability as the other ships but the software is much more straightforward, as is the trials programme itself," said Cdr Frankham.

"It has built on the experience of the others.

"The crew on board is learning as much as we can from the shipyard – they are the experts at the moment, but from September 1 we take over."

WO Robbie Roberts said RN engineers could find themselves on the ship for as long as five years in order to smooth the way.

"They pick up the knowledge and expertise from BAE Systems, then they carry it forward and pass it on to the next generation," he said.

"We know this ship inside out – we have crawled into every space, we know where every pipe goes. We have seen her grow."

The VIP day itself was a chance for the ship's company to do a little showboating.

The all-electric propulsion system – by Batch 2 a much more mature and stable affair – was gunned and the destroyer streaked along at speeds approaching 40mph, driven by twin propellers each the height of a London bus (how could we ever bring you these facts and figures without the help of the dear old Routemaster?)







...r into warship

Dragon then went through a favourite Type 45 party-piece, the tight figures-of-eight which send the 7,000-tonne warship heeling at an angle of more than 12 degrees – which doesn't sound much until you are on the flight deck, clutching at a rail to keep yourself from staggering down the steep slope as the slipstream buffets you.

The flight deck is roughly the size of a five-a-side football pitch, and can comfortably handle an aircraft the size of a Merlin ("although that takes up our volleyball court…" said Cdr Frankham).

Dragon's capacious hangar can accommodate eight of those London buses.

And just to round off the Transport for London comparisons, the spinning egg-shaped Sampson multi-function radar at the top of Dragon's mast is one-and-a-quarter times the diameter of a Tube tunnel.

Inside the ship, even at high speed, the ride is smooth, and the 'wow factor' comparisons continue.

Her fuel tanks have a volume roughly equivalent to half of an Olympic swimming pool, and her food stores have an equivalent capacity to 960 supermarket shopping trolleys.

General stores and spares are stowed in areas which have the combined volume of two articulated lorries, while Dragon's laundry can handle more than 2.8 tonnes of laundry per week.

The waste-handling plant can cope with the equivalent of 300 bathfuls of waste water per day.

Dragon and her sisters are greener ships than their predecessors – up to 40 per cent, according to her builders, meaning she goes further on less fuel than the Type 42s, which are half her size.

And the ship is equipped with more than 400 telephones, most of them hooked into a closed internal system.

The Sea Viper missile system also boasts impressive stats, with missiles which travel at more than 3,000mph and stand as high as ten beer barrels stacked on end.

The missile compartment stood empty for trials, but the essence of the system is more easily seen, from the water tanks beneath which help damp down exhaust gases to the extra height of the compartment to allow for later, longer-range versions of the Aster 15 and Aster 30 missiles.

At the helm – a surprisingly small steering wheel – for part of the day's proceedings was LPT Ross McEvoy, who joined Dragon last November.

When not steering the destroyer, Ross – for whom this is his first sea job as Clubs – runs a fit ship despite some drawbacks.

"We are 90 per cent in date for the RN Fitness Test," he said.

"We have got BAE fitness stuff on board – all my stuff is waiting to be delivered to the gym.

"Otherwise it is flight deck circuits, volleyball and so on."

Dragon's Welsh connections have drawn sailors to serve in her – sailors like PO Lavina Sparling, whose first ship was HMS Cardiff, and who nudged Drafty in the right direction by suggesting Dragon would be just the right draft for her.

WO Roberts said: "We have several Welsh crew members who are incredibly proud to be on the Welsh ship.

"And we had Welsh cakes in the office just before we sailed..."









● *An F18 Super Hornet lands back on the deck of the USS George H W Bush at the height of Saxon Warrior* Picture: Lt Richie Moss, Fleet HQ

In step with our 'No.1 ally'

SADDAM Hussein once promised George H W Bush 'the mother of all battles'.

The Royal Navy promised the 'mother of all workouts'.

Admittedly, not to the octogenerian former president, rather the leviathan named after him.

The 100,000 tons of grey messenger of death that is the world's most powerful surface ship, the USS George H W Bush, had one final test to pass before she began her maiden deployment in the Mediterranean.

That was for her potent battle group – one carrier, one air wing, two cruisers, two destroyers and two auxiliaries – to deal with everything which might be thrown at them in time of war.

To that end, the Royal Navy laid on Saxon Warrior – one of the largest military exercises staged around the UK in recent years.

The Senior Service offered up something old (HMS Gloucester, carrying out her final duty before decommissioning), something new (HMS Dauntless, flexing her muscles with the US Navy for the first time), something borrowed (several UK and foreign ships undergoing Operational Sea Training) and something blue (well formerly blue, HMS Torbay has reverted to more traditional submarine black now after a brief dalliance with a shade of blue).

Oh and HMS Westminster was there, too (apologies, we couldn't find a suitable tag for her in the preceding paragraph...).

Also joining in this international 'party' were France's De Grasse and Marne, while the Spanish sent their frigate Almirante Juan de Borbon.

So the actors were in place, let the drama commence.

The Bush sent her 60 (yes, you read correctly...) F18 Super Hornets to bomb North Wales (MOD ranges rather than centres of population...) while the world and his dog tried to get at the carrier.

Luckily, the flat-top had a guardian angel in the form of Dauntless.

The Americans were impressed when Dauntless' older sister Daring headed to the USA last year to work with USS Enterprise on a similar exercise.

And they were impressed too by D33 when she flashed up her Sea Viper missile system.

Dauntless proved that she could deal with every aerial threat – aircraft or missile – which tried to attack the Bush (although, wouldn't you know it, there were no cricket balls travelling at Mach 3 to down on this occasion, so no chance for the Type 45's party piece...).

"The incredible Sea Viper missile system gave an exceptional performance yet again," said Dauntless' Commanding Officer Capt Richard Powell.

"It was able to simultaneously track and neutralise all fighter jets or missiles which managed to brave the Icelandic ash cloud.

"Dauntless proved yet again she can deliver comprehensive area air defence – a key player, providing protection for the USS George H W Bush Carrier Strike Group, throughout an action-packed Saxon Warrior."

The Americans were also impressed by the technological advances in the Type 45 – Bush battle group commander Rear Admiral Nora Tyson was given a guided tour of the 9,000-tonne warship by Capt Powell, who also showed his VIP guest the mess decks which are the envy of the RN – and certainly much more comfortable than living conditions on the carrier.

Having waged war from the mid-Atlantic to the Scilly Isles, the Bush group might have expected calmer waters in the Channel.

Except that the task force made its way past Plymouth on a Thursday and we all know what that means...

Just for good measure, the team at Flag Officer Sea Training included the carrier group in its Thursday War, the mother of all workouts for ship's companies with every conceivable threat – air, submarine, fast craft attack, fire and flood, basically the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse – thrown at them to determine whether they are ready to deploy.

Thus ended Saxon Warrior. The George H W Bush dropped anchor in the sheltered waters of Stokes Bay near Gosport, her very first overseas port visit.

Meanwhile in London...

Hot on the heels of Saxon Warrior the heads of the British and American Navies reaffirmed their joint commitment to work hand-in-hand.

Each year the First Sea Lord and his American equivalent, the Chief of Naval Operations, hold face-to-face talks in their respective capitals.

This year it fell to Admiral Sir Mark Stanhope to host Admiral Gary Roughead in London.

"The United States is our number one ally, there can be no doubt about that.

"We have close relationships with other navies as well, but in terms of ensuring from the Royal Navy's point of view that we can do business with the Americans, it's important that we're in step in understanding exactly where we're both going."

Admiral Roughead said: "You can exchange a lot of emails, you can look at a lot of Powerpoint slides, but being able to bring the leadership together to talk about opportunities that are ahead of us is extraordinarily important."

The venue for the Admirals' press conference was the splendid 17th century Admiralty Boardroom in Whitehall, whose walls have witnessed everything from Samuel Pepys to the Trafalgar despatches to present day RN discussions.

But if they felt the hand of history on their shoulders, the Admirals looked to the future – global developments and 21st-Century technology.

Admiral Roughead said: "The UK is our number one ally. As we look at events taking place around the world today, and the types of naval capabilities that we want to go forward with, it's important that we do it in a collaborative way as allies and partners."

The two navies have already signed a formal agreement allowing RN and RAF fixed-wing pilots to fly with the US Navy to regain the skills of operating from an aircraft carrier using catapults and traps – something the Royal Navy has not done since the 1970s (see next month's *Navy News* for more details).

The Admirals agreed there were other areas for co-operation, including unmanned systems and the propulsion and common weapons for the next generation of ballistic missile submarines that both navies are designing.

Maritime surveillance is another area where the UK can benefit from US technology, as the US Navy is currently testing its new maritime surveillance plane.

Admiral Roughead said: "We've been flying a very good airplane, the Orion, for quite some time, over four decades. We're now in the process of transitioning to the P8 Poseidon. It's currently in test at Patuxent River and it's doing extraordinarily well."

The admiral said the prospect of ballistic and cruise missiles in the hands of 'non-state' users was fast becoming a significant global threat.

"Those areas that I see developing most rapidly, and likely most problematically, in the future are the proliferation of ballistic and cruise missiles," he said. "It is not necessarily a state-to-state proliferation; we see that proliferation going beyond states."

Another was the increasing number of advanced quiet submarines, which would make effective anti-submarine skills vital in the years to come.

"I have extraordinarily high regard for the UK's anti-submarine warfare capability and I am eager to see how we might take advantage of that expertise," he said, adding: "The UK is at the top of the game in anti-submarine warfare, and it is a game you need to practise – if you don't advance it you are standing still."

Admiral Roughead said other global challenges included cyber warfare, controlling the free flow of goods across sea areas and the difficulty of tackling piracy in the Indian Ocean when the root causes were failed states and lack of law and governance.

"It is a large ocean area, there's no question about it, a very long coastline from which the pirates operate. But the real issue of piracy is the lack of any governance or law enforcement activity ashore.

"I think that it's important that there be recognition of getting at the criminal business ashore and interrupting that process, because it is a business, and they are criminals."

Looking further into the future, he said: "I think the trade routes are going to change for us with the expansion of the Panama Canal.

"And as the Arctic changes and that ocean opens, which is a pretty significant event as we haven't had an ocean open since the end of the Ice Age, we'll begin to see activity up there, whether it's fishing and then resource extraction and then, in about 25 years' time, it will become a profitable trade route.

"The question will become, what will the roles of the navies be and what are the obligations with regard to protection of resources and the security and safety of those who are operating up there?

"And so I think that is one of the reasons we've put in place Task Force Climate Changes to look at the sort of capabilities and capacities you may need to operate in those areas."

Admiral Roughead said the combined capabilities of the two navies owed as much to their people as to equipment.

"If there is one thing that really is the glue that ties us together it's the nature of our people, the culture of coming from the sea.

"The ingenuity, the initiative and the sense of duty that our people have, that is to me the connective tissue that really binds us together."



● *Fleur force one... the participants of Saxon Warrior peel away from USS George H W Bush in 'fleur de lys' formation – including HMS Westminster (far left), HMS Gloucester (off Bush's port side), HMS Dauntless (foreground, right) and HMS Torbay (background, left)*

Picture: Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class (SW/AW) Nicholas Hall, USN


HMS St Albans pictures: LA(Phot) Simmo Simpson

Teamwork helps keep Gulf sea lanes open

NO, THERE'S no tow-rope. It's not a new form of eco-friendly propulsion or homing device for Royal Navy sea boats, but a friendly cetacean enjoying some sport with a boarding party.

The mariners are from **HMS St Albans**, and were conducting an exercise as the frigate took up her role on Operation Kipion – a combination of Operations Telic and Calash, keeping the sea lanes of the Middle East and off the Horn of Africa free of traffickers and pirates.

Having left Portsmouth early last month on a six-month mission, the Type 23 has been busy on passage.

Training is a constant feature of life in a deployed warship, and St Albans is no exception.

Having called in at Gibraltar as she made her way into the Med, the frigate then completed her Operational Capability Confidence Check in Souda Bay in Crete.

As well as honing the skills of both the ship's boarding team and the embarked Royal Marines version at the specially-designed facility, weapons and sensor systems are also put to the test.

Lead Boarding Officer Lt Ben Brocklebank said: "A lot of training and preparation has gone into getting both teams here to this stage.

"This has been a valuable opportunity to have all of them work together and put both their team and professional skills to the test.

"An essential part of this process has been integrating the different skills sets that are brought by the Royal Marines boarding team and the ship's team."

Commanding Officer Cdr Tom Sharpe said: "HMS St Albans has spent the last five months preparing for this deployment and is now ready to deliver.

"Given the political climate in our anticipated operating area we must be prepared to cover the full spectrum of naval tasking, from routine engagements to high-intensity operations, and be able to switch between them with traditional flexibility."

It has not been all work.

The ship made good use of the Mediterranean climate by breaking training with traditional deployed activities such as flight deck sports, hands to bathe and barbecues.

Best to get such things out the way before reaching their destination – a combination of operational focus and extreme temperatures (in excess of 45°C) will decimate the numbers willing to run around the upper deck.

Working as part of a coalition, St Albans will scour the seas to identify potential freebooters and deter the various illegal activities, whilst providing reassurance to those who use the sea lanes for routine and lawful business...

... a role which **RFA Diligence** has been fulfilling for several months now.

The forward repair/depot ship has been on counter-piracy operations, but has had the odd chance for a stand-down.

One such example was the royal wedding, when a polo match was arranged at Dili Park (aka the Flight Deck).

Now your average Royal Fleet Auxiliary ship does not have its own string of polo ponies, so the matelots had to improvise.

As the ship bid farewell to the visiting Rear Admiral Jean-Louis Kerignard, the new Commander of Combined Task Force 150 – who had been on board for briefings, then watched part of the wedding with the ship's company – the field of play was cleared and the teams lined up.

With ponies made of mop handles with cardboard cut-out heads, and makeshift plastic mallets with extended handles, the Royal Blues and Windsor Whites fought out a fiercely-competitive match, the Blues winning 10-5.

Dili Park was then transformed into a high street, the barbecue was flashed up and a street party ensued until the sun set, when the auxiliary resumed her pirate-hunting activities.

At around the same time, minehunter **HMS Middleton** was just returning to the fray after a four-week maintenance period in Bahrain, during which time she had an engine change.

Middleton has been operating in the harsh conditions of the Gulf since early 2010, so a thorough overhaul was just the ticket before the ship embarked on a fortnight of intensive UK/US minehunting exercises in the central Gulf.

Crew 6 joined the ship in January this year, and as June drew to a close they were making their final preparations to return home – a welcome end to working a ship in seawater at 30°C and air temperatures up to 45°C.

Finally, in our round-up of Gulf activities, a rare chance to give the Crabs a chuck-up in our pages.

Thanks to Ginger and Algy and their light-blue pals, **HMS Chiddingfold**'s mission in the Gulf continues unabated.

Cheery Chid had to put into Dubai when she developed an electrical fault, and the shining knights of the RAF's Command Support Air Transport, stepped in to deliver the vital parcel.

Initially, a Hercules was going to be despatched to fly the relevant part from Bahrain, but that would have taken longer, so the CSAT offered the services of their small twin-engined HS125 jet.

Four hours later the part was in the hands of the ETs on Chid, and shortly after the Hunt-class ship was back on patrol.

It was, says Chiddingfold's CO Lt Cdr Charles Maynard, "a neat bit of teamwork in theatre between the RAF and RN.

"A bit of lateral thinking meant that we were able to return to operations with the minimum of delay."


● *Action from the inter-mess bucketball competition on board HMS St Albans during the first week of patrols in the Gulf*


● *Flight deck polo from Dili Park*

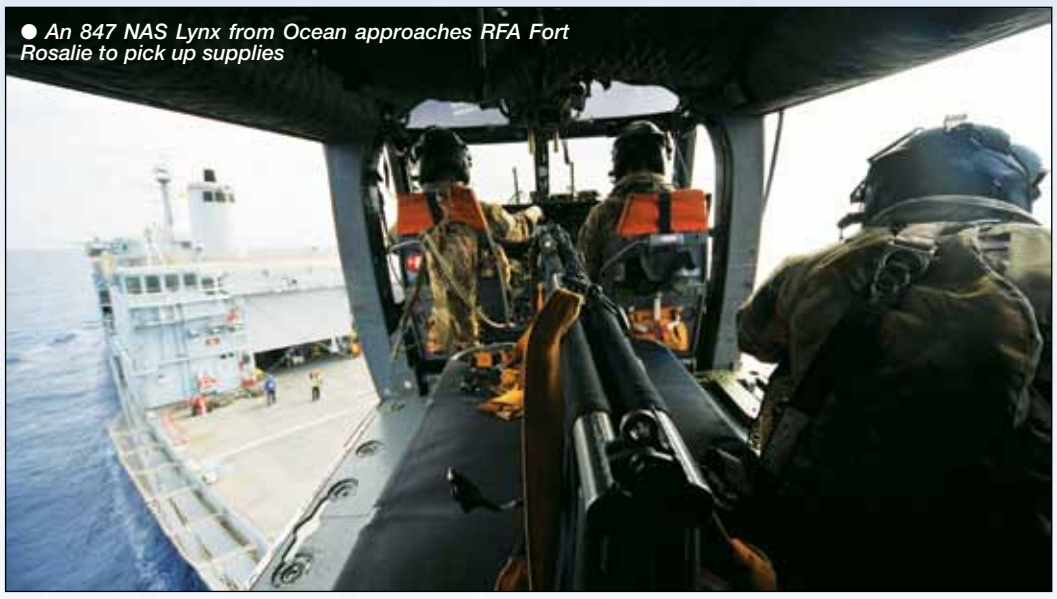

● *AB Natalie Moore helps bring HMS St Albans alongside in Gibraltar*



● *Sutherland's 815 NAS Lynx conducts a patrol off the Libyan coast*



● *HMS Albion passes beneath the 1,300ft span of the Suez Canal Bridge as she makes for the Red Sea*



● *An 847 NAS Lynx from Ocean approaches RFA Fort Rosalie to pick up supplies*



● *HMS Albion receives fuel from RFA Wave Knight (left) and stores from RFA Fort Rosalie (right) during one of numerous RASes*

Claws a

FUNNY old month.

One minute you're 'invading' Cyprus.

The next you're steaming up and down off Libya in the line of fire.

Another couple of weeks and most of you are east of Suez, back on schedule...

...while your biggest ship continues to prowl in the Gulf of Sirte.

Still, you probably couldn't ask for a better recent example of the flexibility of naval power...

Britain's Response Force Task Group – flagship Albion, helicopter carrier HMS Ocean, escort HMS Sutherland and an assortment of auxiliaries from two RFA Bay-class landing support ships (Mounts and Cardigan), to tanker Wave Knight and floating warehouse Fort Rosalie – left the UK this spring for a long-planned series of amphibious exercises under the umbrella of the Cougar 11 deployment.

But as the force's title suggests, it must be able to respond at short notice to global events... say a civil war in North Africa.

And so it was that, with exercises concluded around Cyprus – the first substantial work-out for the task group – the bulk of the force was ordered to the central Med in support of Operation Unified Protector, the NATO-led international mission exerting pressure on the Gaddafi regime.

And just days later, Ocean's Apache gunships came through their Libyan baptism of fire.

The imposing Army Air Corps helicopters were sent to destroy government targets – a checkpoint and a radar site – at Brega in the south-eastern Gulf of Sirte, 120 miles south of Benghazi.

The helicopters used their Hellfire missiles and 30mm cannon to eliminate their targets before returning to the Mighty O.

The strike was part of another night of concerted NATO raids against the Libyan military machine: the RAF struck at ammunition bunkers deep inside the country at Waddan, some 300 miles south-east of the capital Tripoli, while French attack helicopters from the assault ship FS Tonnerre also took out land targets.

The action, said Response Force Commander Cdre John Kingwell, demonstrated "NATO's resolve to protect the Libyan people" and served as "a further example of the increasing pressure on Colonel Gaddafi and his regime to recognise the will of the international community and cease attacks on his own people."

That pressure was applied again just days later on the opposite side of the Gulf when the Apaches blasted two of Gaddafi's boats out of the water and eliminated an anti-aircraft battery.

The helicopters were scrambled to intercept high-speed craft closing in on the besieged port of Misrata.

Pro-Government forces have made repeated attempts to disrupt shipping making for the rebel-held city, chiefly by attempting to lay mines in its approaches.

An Allied warship on patrol in the western Gulf of Sirte detected the boats moving at high speed towards Misrata and Ocean was alerted.

The Apaches found the craft, destroying two using their 30mm cannon. The helicopters then closed in on a ZSU-23-4 Shilka – a light-armoured radar-guided anti-aircraft vehicle – near Zlitan, 30 miles up the coast from Misrata. It too was knocked out.

The Apaches are just the tip of the Ocean iceberg.

The first strike not only demanded a whole ship's company effort from the Mighty O, but from the entire task group.

The operation was directed from the very impressive ops room on Albion, where not just details of enemy positions and movements were gathered, but also meteorological and oceanographic data.

"The warfare team work flat out to build the surface and air pictures – nothing should approach the task group that is not identified and classified," said AB Neil Kiely.

The miniguns and other defensive positions on the ships were manned – a hot and demanding task by day, cooler by night, but much harder as the sentries stared through the half-light in search of fast attack craft.

It is a heavy burden borne by young men and women.

"We know that keeping an armed watch out here on the upper deck



pictures: la(phots) guy pool, hms ocean, luron wright, hms albion, and keith morgan, rnpoty



nd effect

could save the lives of our crew mates," said AB Daniel Cannarella.

Those on the upper decks of the task force also experience what those in the ops rooms, hangars and engine rooms do not: the spectre of war on the horizon.

"From the bridge at night we could see the explosions ashore," said Albion's AB Samuel 'Gangsta' Smith.

"We knew that this would have an effect on Gaddafi's forces."

All the media coverage, of course, has been on those Apaches and what they've done ashore, nothing would have been achieved without the basics of food, fuel, ammunition, spare parts.

With four amphibious ships, two escorts and hundreds of Royal Marines committed to Cougar, long-term sustainability thousands of miles from the UK is key to the success of the deployment, hence the presence of Wave Knight and Fort Rosalie.

During the fortnight of Exercise Cypriot Lion alone there were 25 replenishments at sea (or RASes). A dozen transferred dry stores – 232 pallets of food, ammunition and other goods transferred between ships by helicopter or jackstay.

And 'wet stores' – diesel, aviation fuel, lubricants and water – were transferred on 13 occasions; 4.6 million litres in all (just short of enough liquid to fill two Olympic-sized swimming pools).

Albion reckons she has the 'most experienced RAS team in the Fleet' – which is a gauntlet neatly laid down.

She's been hooked up to an RFA for the equivalent of more than an entire day, during which time *inter alia* 200 pallets of stores were transferred on to the assault ship.

"In one RAS alone we took over 3,000 family-size tins of beans and over a mile in length of sausages," said PO(CS) 'Taff' Edwards.

"I have never RASed that amount and I don't think any other chef or caterer has in their time in the RN. I think the whole RAS party slept well that night with a few aching bodies the next day after it was all stowed."

The challenge of co-ordinating two 20,000-ton ships at a distance of 36 yards apart is "intoxicating," Lt Simon Shaw, Albion's second navigator, assures us.

Or, as Albion's buffer PO(Sea) Craig Smith puts it: "To my mind a RAS is the singlemost dangerous evolution carried out by the Navy in peace time.

"It's paramount you have confidence in two things: the kit and the people."

Wave Knight has also been provisioning the Unified Protector ships, including the thirsty HMS Liverpool and Spanish warship Méndez Nuñez, 60 miles off Misrata.

It's the last fuel the Unified Protector ships will get from Wave Knight for some time; she's now shifted east of Suez, as have Albion and Sutherland, to get back to the original Cougar schedule – leaving Ocean and her Apaches behind.

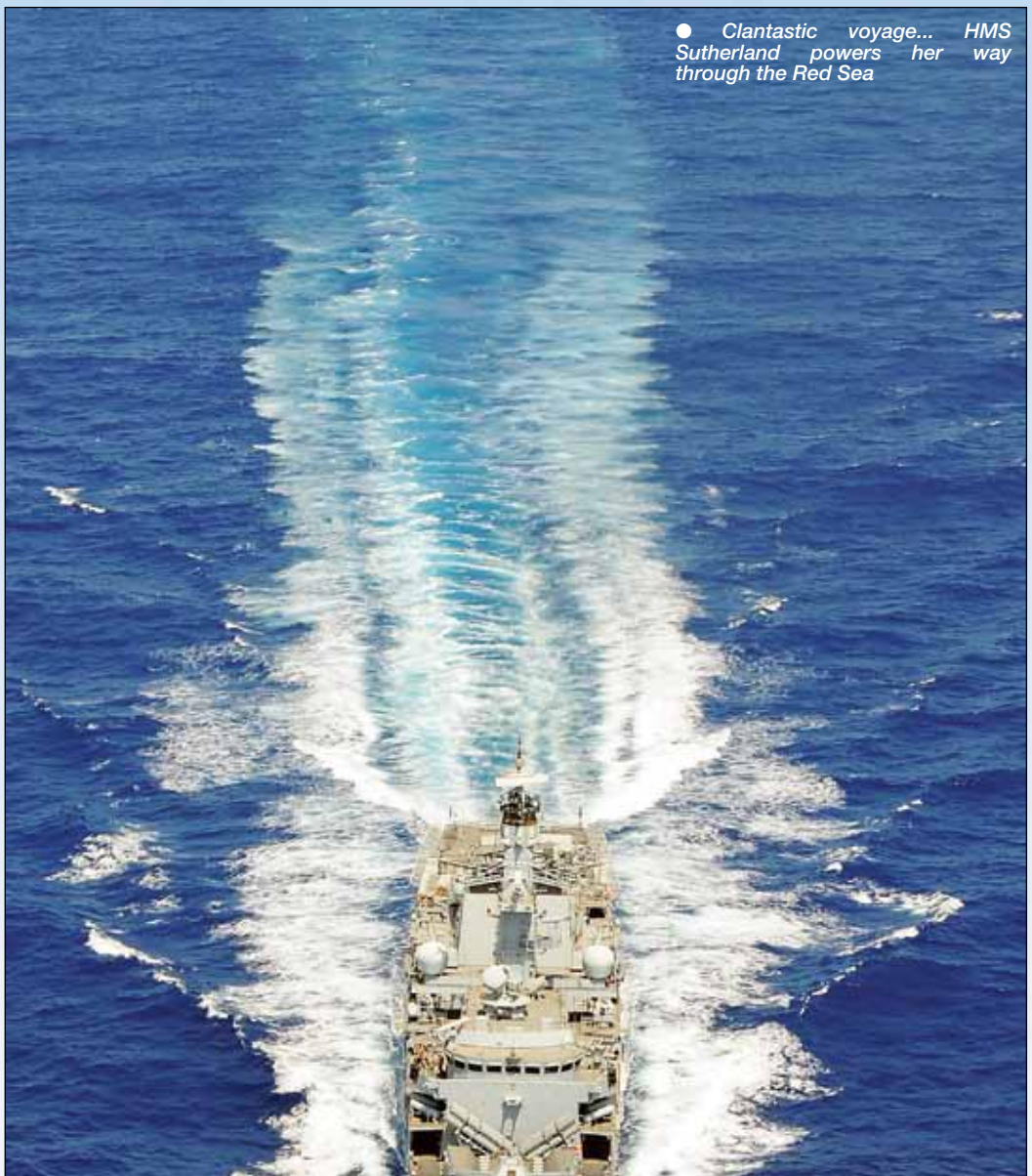
Passing through Egypt's great waterway means the Cougar ships link up with a substantial RN/RFA presence (at least ten warships and auxiliaries are in the Indian Ocean and Gulf region presently) and fall under the banner of the UK Maritime Component Commander, the senior Royal Navy officer in this part of the world, Cdre Tim Fraser, based in Bahrain.

He's looking forward to making use of the new arrivals to assist the global effort against piracy, smuggling, drug-running and terrorism in the region.

"The Middle East is a vital artery of world trade, linking Europe and America with the Far East. Over 23,000 ships pass through the Gulf of Aden each year," he said.

"The work of the Royal Navy in this part of the world is invaluable to the UK's own defence and security as well as that of the wider region."

Invaluable indeed. But surely the tasks there can't be as varied as this past month. Or can they?

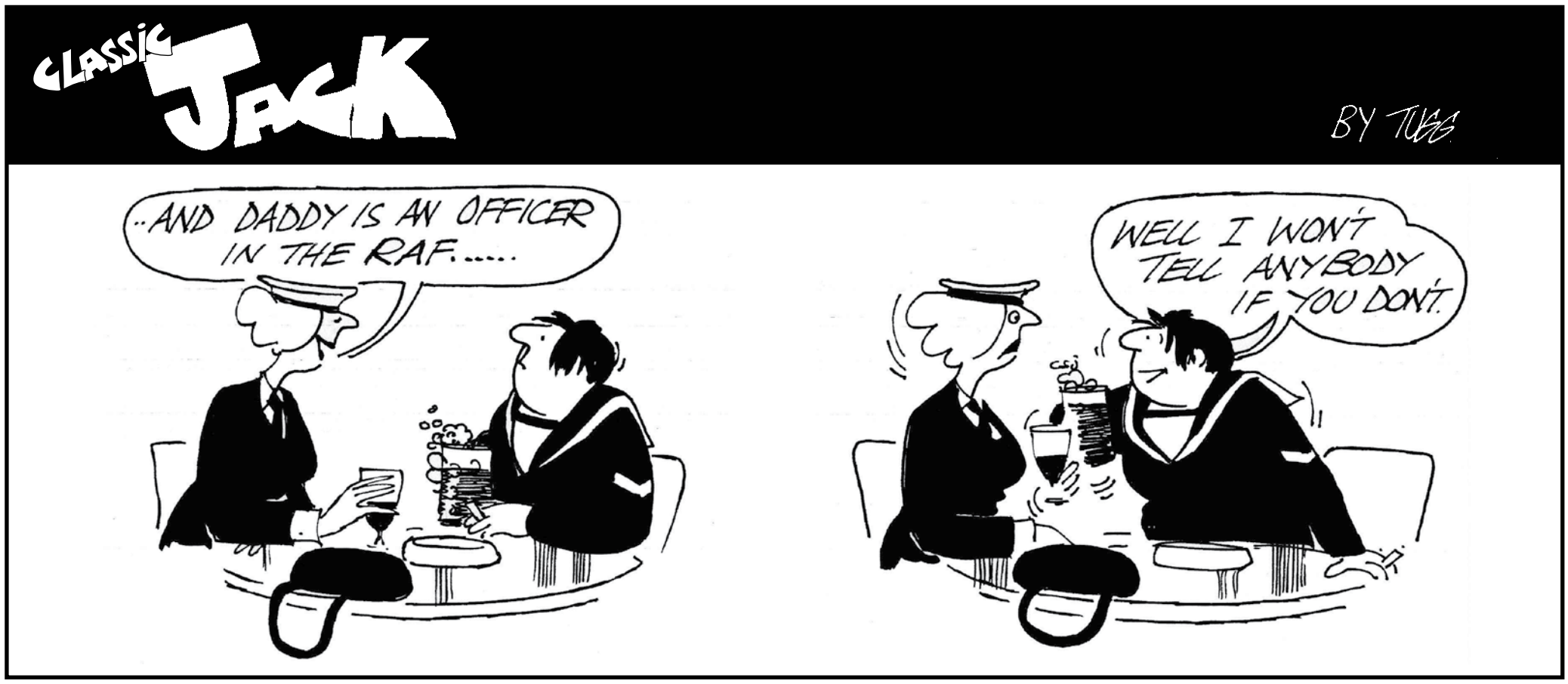


● *Clantastic voyage... HMS Sutherland powers her way through the Red Sea*



● *Army Air Corps Apache gunships lift off from HMS Ocean on another sortie in the Gulf of Sirte*

COMMENT



Little ships, big value

RESPONDING to Mr Lees' letter (June), the First Patrol Boat Squadron has a long and distinguished history, it has been supporting the University Royal Naval Units (URNUs) since 1968 and is a really 'good news' story for the RN.

The Squadron prides itself on providing value for money: it operates 14 ships for 48 weeks of the year and provides life-changing training experiences for 770 students across the country.

The squadron and the URNUs pride themselves in providing flexible and adaptive training to foster initiative while preserving those elements fundamental to Naval ethos – integrity, physical and moral courage, self-discipline, individual responsibility and duty.

We also provide vocational training in the skills of leadership, management and teamwork vital for the future of the RN and arguable the UK.

Finally, it should be noted that the P2000s give invaluable support to the wider Fleet, whether it be providing additional navigational and ship experience to officers and ratings under training, supporting tactical development or supporting joint exercises.

It is also important to point out that with the intensity of naval operations abroad and our enduring support for these, P2000s are important in preserving the positive and constant profile of the RN across the UK.

The 14 URNU P2000s are based across the UK and impact on those communities and often 'land-locked' parts where there would otherwise be no Naval presence.

All this for just twice the average annual CEO remuneration!

– Cdr David Wilson,
Commander First Patrol Boat Squadron,
Commander URNU, Portsmouth

...I would like to respond from the point of view of a Midshipman currently serving in Northumbrian URNU who is actively seeking to join the Royal Navy.

Before joining the URNU my experience of the Royal Navy was Families' Days at sea, otherwise I had little opportunity to see the RN at work.

The size and capability of a P2000 restricts the ability to demonstrate fully the role of the Royal Navy, however, the opportunities available provide invaluable life skills and are appreciated by all who receive them.

For those wishing to join the RN after graduating, a basic understanding of seamanship is obtained, allowing a proficient level to be reached before entering BRNC Dartmouth.

Navigational skills are also taught, and although URNU students may not have the skills to pilot an LPD into Devonport, they are proficient enough to ensure safe passage of a P2000 into port.

The P2000 is a valuable entity for training the military and civilian leaders of the future.

My time in the URNU has been varied and challenging. At sea I have spent time on board HMS Example learning about ship handling, seamanship and the daily routines that make the Navy work.

Both at sea and ashore, the URNU has allowed me to improve my leadership, teamwork, management, communication and social skills – all essential for both military and civilian life.

It is real. It is hard work. It is a unique experience.

– Midshipman J Wingate RNR
Northumbrian URNU
HMS Example

...THERE is no doubt that questions should be asked of all public expenditure, but cutting off the Navy's influence in society would be ill-thought and a short-sighted strategy for future reductions.

Let's hope not everyone in the RN shares Mr Lee's view and will work to maximise the assets which the RN has, so the taxpayer gets the value for their money which I truly believe it is.

– Mike Hill,
Birmingham



Each month Pussers Rum are offering to courier a bottle of their finest tipple to the writer of our top letter – provided he or she is over 18, of course. For youngsters and teetotallers we will provide an alternative prize.

This month's winner is: **Mike Hill**

Tears and joy in Crete

AFTER attending the 70th anniversary of the Battle of Narvik at which there was not a White Ensign in sight, I decided to do my best to ensure that the 70th anniversary of the Battle for Crete would be different.

Things were not looking too promising until days before the main event when from Athens came the immortal signal 'WE HAVE A SHIP'.

From then, and thanks to the generosity of the Heroes Return Big Lottery Fund, it was the most fantastic week of my life.



● *Bernard Hallas (right) and his carer, David 'Barney' Clifton, wearing the traditional headwear of Cretan warriors*

Sad to say the veterans were now in declining numbers but this was more than made up for by the numerous events arranged by the people of Crete who were determined to show their gratitude to what was left of the Armed Forces who had come to their aid in their hour of need.

As usual the British Cemetery at Souda Bay was the main event, and to receive an invitation from the Captain of HMS Sutherland was the final accolade.

I met my lovely consul, Claire Fragaki, and a double hug and kiss was definitely on the cards. The following day Barney, my carer, and I were 'kidnapped' by a coachload of Australian MPs and treated like royalty.

We were escorted over the island by unmarked police and wined and dined.

The final day was a visit to the German Cemetery in company with the Duke of Gloucester, after which we proceeded to the Maleme Airfield for a fantastic display by the Red Arrows.

As thousands of townsfolk watched, an army of Cretan children ran across the tarmac carrying baskets and drenched us with rose petals.

Need I say, I shed a tear...

– Bernard Hallas, York RN and RM Associations, Haxby, York

...MY wife and I attended the service held at the Commonwealth War Cemetery where an immaculate honour guard from HMS Sutherland was present.

Commenting on the visible differences in turn-out between the Royal Navy and the Greek Navy she turned to one of Sutherland's ABs and said: "I don't think the Greek Navy are used to this."

The answer: 'No, and I don't think they are used to using an iron either, I should send them one in the post!" said it all.

Congratulations to HMS Sutherland and especially the guard who sweltered under Cretan sun.

– John Walker,
New Malden, Surrey

LETTERS to the editor should always be accompanied by the correspondent's name and address, not necessarily for publication.

E-mail correspondents are also requested to provide this information. Letters cannot be submitted over the telephone.

If you submit a photograph which you did not take yourself, please make sure that you have the permission for us to publish it.



Given the volume of letters, we cannot publish all of your correspondence in Navy News.

We do, however, publish many on our website, www.navynews.co.uk, accompanied by images.

We look particularly for correspondence which stimulates debate, makes us laugh or raises important issues.

The editor reserves the right to edit your submissions.

opinion

SPECIAL relationship, 'essential relationship,' or 'number one allies,' call it what you will, our ties with the United States are very close.

Defence thinking since the end of World War 2 has been to stand shoulder-to-shoulder with the USA, presenting a formidable united front in a series of global conflicts.

There are differences of opinion (US neutrality on the issue of sovereignty of the Falklands being one of the most obvious) but by and large our shared interests are far stronger than our differences.

As the American Fleet is about ten times bigger than our own, it's gratifying to know that there are still areas of expertise in which the Royal Navy leads the world, as the US Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral Gary Roughead, acknowledged when he visited London last month.

Mine clearance is one, anti-submarine warfare is another. We can share our skills in those fields, just as the US Navy will share its knowledge over the next few years in carrier operations so the Royal Navy regains its expertise in using catapults and traps.

Both nations face budget cuts, both can learn from each other on how to operate effectively with reduced capabilities.

Perhaps the most important principle that binds the two countries is a shared belief in freedom and liberal democracy, and a willingness to fight for them.

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The views expressed in this paper do not necessarily reflect the views of the MOD



● *Capt Rob McPherson rapid ropes down to deliver the latest James Bond book at St Pancras International station*

Commandos deliver new Bond novel

THE first copies of the latest James Bond novel *Carte Blanche* were delivered by air – thanks to a group of Royal Marines Commandos.

The book, written by American thriller writer Jeffery Deaver and published by Hodder and Stoughton, dropped from the ceiling of St Pancras International Station in London in the clutches of four members of the Royal Marines Display Team.

On the concourse below were gathered symbols of 007's lifestyle as echoed in the novel – a Bentley Continental GT, the Champagne Bar (touted as the longest in Europe) and a glamorous woman with a BSA 1966 Spitfire motorbike.

Also attending were members of Bond creator Ian Fleming's family, including his niece Lucy.

Ian Fleming, a commander in the wartime RNVR, worked in Naval Intelligence, his experiences leading to the creation of the renowned spy James Bond, himself a Naval Reservist.

Having been delivered by the rapid-roping commandoes, the books were taken off to remain under lock and key at a secret location until midnight on the day of publication.

More than 100 million Bond books have been sold worldwide.

Moor support from RN helicopter force

THREE Navy aircraft provided top cover for this year's Ten Tors event in the West Country – and the only casualty of note was a tent blown down by the downdraught from the rotors.

Yeovilton once more provided search and rescue, casualty evacuation and logistical support which is vital to the safe running of the annual challenge, which sees 400 six-strong teams of teenagers trekking across Dartmoor.

Ten Tor regulars 848 Naval Air Squadron provided two Junglie Sea Kings, with the Commando Helicopter Force team bringing all the equipment needed to support all three aircraft, which used Okehampton Army Camp as a temporary base.

The third helicopter was a Lynx from 815 NAS.

Each helicopter and crew flew more than five hours on both days, performing more than 30 landings each.

That was of particular concern for the crew of the Lynx, which has an array of sensitive antennae and aerials on its underside, which could easily have been damaged by the granite rocky outcrops of the moor.

With ideal walking conditions over the weekend, the Sea Kings were called in for the expected crop of minor injuries – twisted ankles and the like – which required the youngsters to be airlifted for medical treatment.

The Lynx experienced a relatively quiet weekend, the only problem being when the aircraft's rotor downdraught blew over a tent on one of the manned tors during a landing.



● *One of the two 848 NAS Sea Kings supporting the Ten Tors event on Dartmoor, with the 815 NAS Lynx in the background*

Picture: Nick Newns

A quick trip back to base camp meant the tent was replaced in short order.

When not directly supporting the walkers, the Fleet Air Arm machines were involved in ancillary tasks such as flying event organisers, VIPs and the media over the moor.

Such flights are seen as valuable training opportunities for the aircrews – it is bread-and-butter stuff for the Junglies, but also a useful exercise for the maritime Lynx, which could face similar terrain and tasks if required in humanitarian operations when operating from the flight deck of a Royal Navy ship.

With the challenge over and the trekkers cleared from the moor, there was one more job for the Junglies.

Teams on the 35, 45 and 55-mile routes follow a variety of courses but must visit ten of the 20 or so manned tors during their trek.

Those who manned the tors, and all their equipment, had to be picked up and flown back to Okehampton before the aircraft could return home to Somerset.

Wildfire returns to HQ

THE Reservists of HMS Wildfire have marched into their new home at Northwood Headquarters – almost a quarter of a century after moving out.

Commander-in-Chief Fleet Sir Trevor Soar welcomed the 80-strong unit back home from their 'temporary' base of 23 years at Oxhey Drive South, unveiling a plaque to mark the occasion and paying tribute to the work of Reservists from the deserts of Afghanistan to the South Atlantic.

The Admiral noted that the move would strengthen the RNR's link to operations.

"HMS Wildfire has maintained an enduring commitment to operations with a strong track record of deployment dating back to Op Telic in 2003, when 25 per cent of the unit were mobilised," he said.

"I greatly value the work of the Royal Naval Reserve and, in particular, the important contribution to training and operations made by Wildfire.

"In meeting its global operational commitments, the Naval Service will continue to depend upon the unique skills and flexibility which our Reserve Forces offer."

Admiral Soar also presented the unit awards for 2011.

AB Shane Andrews was the unit's best New Entry, Lt Laura Harrison was Wildfire's Top Achiever and Lt Cdr Simon Goodes won the Commanding Officer's prize.

Lt Cdr Goodes was one of four long-serving Reservists on parade who were members of the unit when it left the Headquarters back in 1988, shortly after it was badly damaged by the Great Storm of 1987.

They have nearly 120 years of Naval service between them.

Hog roast for Navy medics

THE Royal Navy Medical Club is holding their hog roast 'blood red barbecue' at the Institute of Naval Medicine in Alverstoke, Gosport on Wednesday July 6, and with many personnel involved in Herrick 14 in Afghanistan it is hoped many spouses and partners will attend.

A formal 'blood red dinner' will be held in Portsmouth on Friday November 4 to allow those deployed in Afghanistan to attend.

Details from Lt Kay Hallsworth on 9380 68033 (023 9276 8033) or see the RNMC group on Facebook (request membership through Lt Hallsworth).



● *An artist's impression of how Alliance will look after the £6.5 million revamp*

Alliance wins lottery grant

BRITAIN'S only wartime-era submarine and memorial to 5,300 men 'on eternal patrol' will be saved thanks to a lottery hand-out of more than £3m.

HMS Alliance – centrepiece of the RN Submarine Museum in Gosport and visited by around 50,000 people every year – is badly corroded and sorely in need of a complete overhaul.

That work will now begin next month with the donation from the Heritage Lottery Fund allowing for a complete revamp of the boat.

The submarine rests on cradles which extend over the water, making for an impressive sight, but also making it difficult and expensive to conserve; pontoons and a skeleton of scaffolding are needed whenever work has to be carried out on the boat.

Now a permanent jetty will be built on the seaward side, allowing the public the chance to see both sides of the vessel (and walk under her propeller) and conservationists to work on her hull more easily.

The £3.4m grant will also help work to revamp Alliance's innards, reflecting changes in life on board.

"As the memorial to all submariners who've fought and died in service, it's so important that Alliance is saved and brought to life for future generations so they have the opportunity to understand and learn about the Silent Service," said Vice Admiral Sir Tim McClement, the submarine museum's chairman.

After Holland I – Britain's first submarine, also on display at the museum – Alliance is the holy grail of the Silent Service.

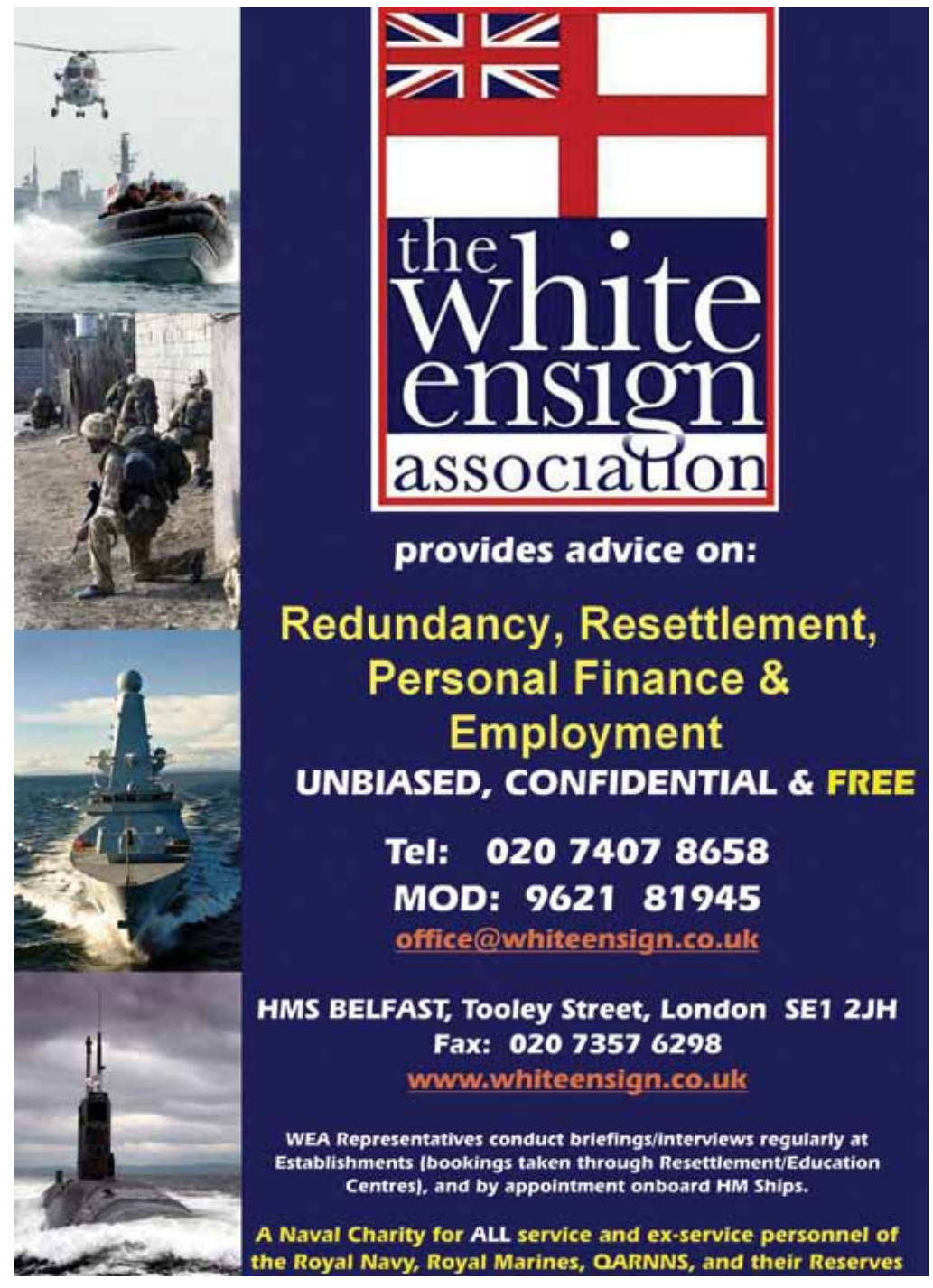
Built for war service in the Pacific, Alliance was launched barely a fortnight before the end of the war in the Far East, and did not enter service until 1947.

She continued to serve the Navy until the early 1970s, spent five years as a training vessel alongside and was finally preserved as a museum piece in 1981.

That saved her from the breaker's yard, but not the elements and birdlife, which have taken their toll over three decades, so much so that a £6.5m restoration appeal was launched last summer.

Thanks to the lottery input, the museum is just £700,000 short of its target now – although in the longer term there are plans for a £1.5m new gallery telling the story of Alliance and submarine weapons to add to the existing exhibition halls on the site.

You can continue to support the Alliance appeal via www.submarine-museum.co.uk or by calling the appeal office on 023 9251 0354 ext 244.



From small



● *The bulbous bow assembly for HMS Queen Elizabeth at Rosyth, with the new Goliath crane still on board the MV Zhen Hua behind it*

I WAS never very good at Airfix kits, *writes Mike Gray*.

Too impatient. Too heavy-handed with the glue. Finger-prints in the paint. Creased transfers.

But the workforce at shipyards across the country are good at assembling military kits – in this case, on a 1:1 scale and bigger than anything the Navy has ever ordered before.

The end result will be two aircraft carriers, but that end result is still hard to imagine while walking through the cavernous assembly sheds at BAE's Govan shipyard.

The concrete floor is littered with machines, cradles, frames, and components, but a brief tour with welding supervisor Mark Cosgrove reveals order in the apparent chaos.

Steel plates, up to 50mm thick, are delivered to the yard on the south bank of the Clyde, and when ready for use they are shot-blasted to remove any rust, then sent to the plasma cutter, which scythes through metal in a tank of water to protect the operator and prevent the plate from buckling under the heat generated.

Each steel plate has a unique number, and when that plate is ready to be cut the operator on the platform punches in the number, said Mark, who has been at the yard since 1999 and helped build the Daring-class destroyers.

The machine retrieves details of the cuts from a central database, and starts to work on the sheet.

When the cutter is done, all the components – flat plates, brackets, braces and suchlike – are laid out as a 'work pack' – "It's just like an Airfix kit," said Mark.

In the cutting process, each component is stamped with a unique number; every single item, no matter how small, has its predetermined place in the 65,000-tonne warships.

"That also helps us trace back if there is a problem with material," added Mark.

From the preparation area the work packs are moved to the panel line, where assembly begins.

Small plates can be edge-welded into a larger deck plate in an hour, a job which used to take an entire eight-hour shift.

Stiffening bars, with scalloped edges to allow corrosive seawater to drain away, are welded in place, and what used to take more than two-and-a-half hours to achieve manually can now be done mechanically to a higher standard in around 20 minutes – a technique developed on the Type 45 destroyer project.

Transverse bars are spot-welded on, a press forcing the bars down while powerful magnets pull the deckplate up to ensure it remains straight and true.

These bars are then welded into place, both sides simultaneously, and further bars, brackets and fittings added until that unit is complete and the work pack exhausted.

A final check is made to ensure nothing is missing, and the unit can be moved on to the next stage of assembly.

Basic assembly is carried out in a logical sequence to save time and prevent unnecessary storage or movement of finished assemblies.

Many opportunities to improve product-ivity at the yard have been taken, including the provision of special vending machines.

There are no snacks or drinks in these strategically-placed machines, but grinding discs, the idea being that a worker does not have to go all the way to a distant store to pick up a disc but inserts a card into the machine and draws only what is needed, allowing for a more efficient use of time and resources, and also a more accurate record of usage for stock-control purposes.

Deck and bulkhead assemblies are brought together on a perfectly-level platform, welded together and inspected by representatives from insurers Lloyds.

Once cleared they are tidied up by caulkers – a title which echoes the days of wooden sailing ships, when the decks and hull of a ship were made watertight by 'caulking' or filling the gaps between planking – and ready for the next stage.

So, just like those Airfix kits, the components fit together as a small assembly, the small assemblies fit together as bigger assemblies, bigger assemblies fit together in rings six or seven decks high and over 1,000 tonnes in weight, until eventually you end up with colossal 'blocks'.

The rings which have been welded together in the assembly shed at Govan cannot take a flight deck on top just yet as the finished block would be too high for the door and there would be precious little headroom to work with under the roof.

Strolling around the top of the block, we step cautiously around large square holes in the deck.

Shafts pierce the block from top to bottom; a lift in one corner will connect a rail system in the weapons store to the flight deck, but now is an eerie yawning chasm.

Assembly continues at a steady pace on these blocks and rings, as the deck spaces have to be filled.



● *A 'dry' cabin unit sits on the future hangar deck of HMS Queen Elizabeth (above) and a plumbing installation awaits the finishing touches (below)*





● *The £12m 68m high Goliath crane is assembled at Rosyth close to the dock where the new carriers will be pieced together*





● *(Above) A plasma cutter slicing through steel plate for Lower Block 05 of HMS Queen Elizabeth in Govan (Right) The Goliath crane towers over Number One Dock at Rosyth, the largest dry dock in the UK, where the carriers will be assembled*

beginnings...

A dry cabin unit sits on the deck in what will eventually be a hangar in HMS Queen Elizabeth; 'dry' means there is no plumbing to connect, so the unit can just be slotted into place and power cables attached.

As we descend through the decks more and more fittings are in place; a stand-alone plumbing installation just below the hangar is waiting for urinals, basins, walls – just about everything, to be honest – while further down, empty spaces have been filled with a warren of pre-assembled units and fittings.

Down near the keel we find ourselves in a machinery space, complete with wide-bore pipes, pumps and plant.

All rests on a lifting cradle built to allow a hydraulic unit to bear the finished block away when the time comes.

Lower Block 03 is in the middle section of the ship, and when outfitting is finished and all the sections have been welded together, it will weigh almost 10,000 tonnes.

But its ultimate destination lies some 35 miles east, though it will require a journey of hundreds of miles by barge as the block is carried by sea to the Babcock yard at Rosyth, where an already huge dry dock has been extended to allow final assembly of the carrier.

There are already around 80 units of various sizes sitting on the north bank of the Forth waiting for their slot in the assembly programme, including the bulbous bow section which I last saw emerging in pieces from a shed in Appledore, Devon, one cold morning in April 2010.

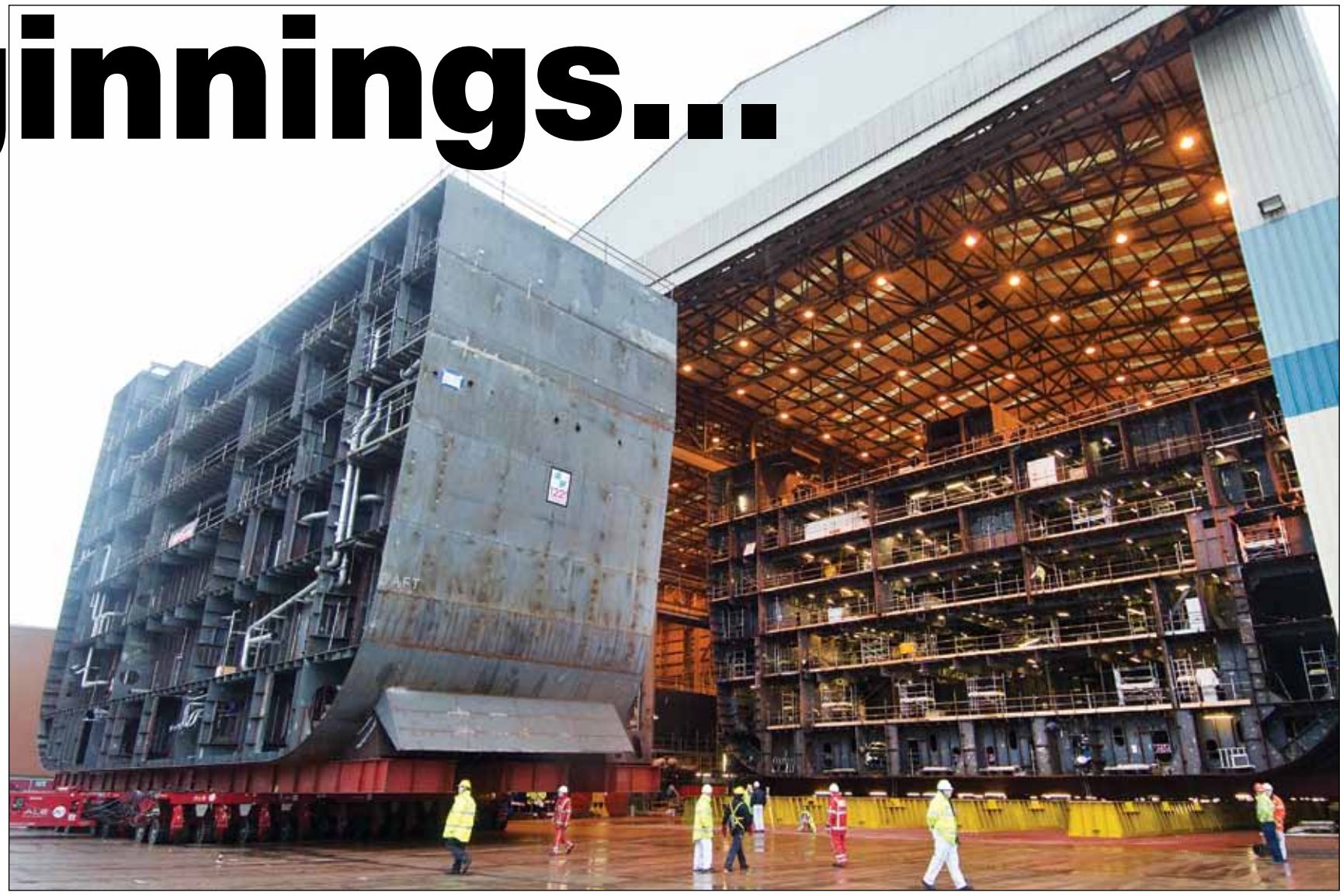
Nearby sits part of the flight deck, and various sponsons are stacked a little further away.

Another massive shed sits to the north of the dock; four of its capacious bays are dedicated to the Queen Elizabeth-class project, while the fifth contains Sandown-class minehunter HMS Shoreham, dwarfed by the unfinished hardware around it.

Towering above it all is the Goliath crane shipped in from China on the specialist carrier MV Zhen Hua 13, which was assembled using a large land-based crane which was itself assembled using three smaller cranes...

Huge though the dock is, the finished ships will be even more impressive; one member of staff remarks that when the first carrier nears completion her flight deck will overshadow the building that runs alongside the dock.

But for now she is still in pieces as the giant kit awaits final assembly.



● *One of the giant rings which form Lower Block 03 is moved into place at BAE Govan*

First steel cut for Prince of Wales

WITH HMS Queen Elizabeth taking shape (or shapes) in six shipyards across the UK, work has begun on the second of class, HMS Prince of Wales.

Defence Secretary Dr Liam Fox performed the honours at BAE Systems' Govan shipyard, pressing the button on a computer-guided laser to cut the first piece of steel for the 65,000-tonne aircraft carrier.

The Aircraft Carrier Alliance – a partnership of the MOD, BAE Systems, Babcock and Thales – and its main contractors have some 10,000 people working on the project, with activity centred on shipyards in Glasgow, Portsmouth, Appledore, Rosyth, Merseyside and Newcastle.

In a decade's time the two £5bn carriers will be the hub of the UK's global defence policy, the launch pads for F35 Lightning II fighter-bombers and helicopters.

It will take until around 2016 to complete Queen Elizabeth (R08) with her sister arriving a couple of years later.

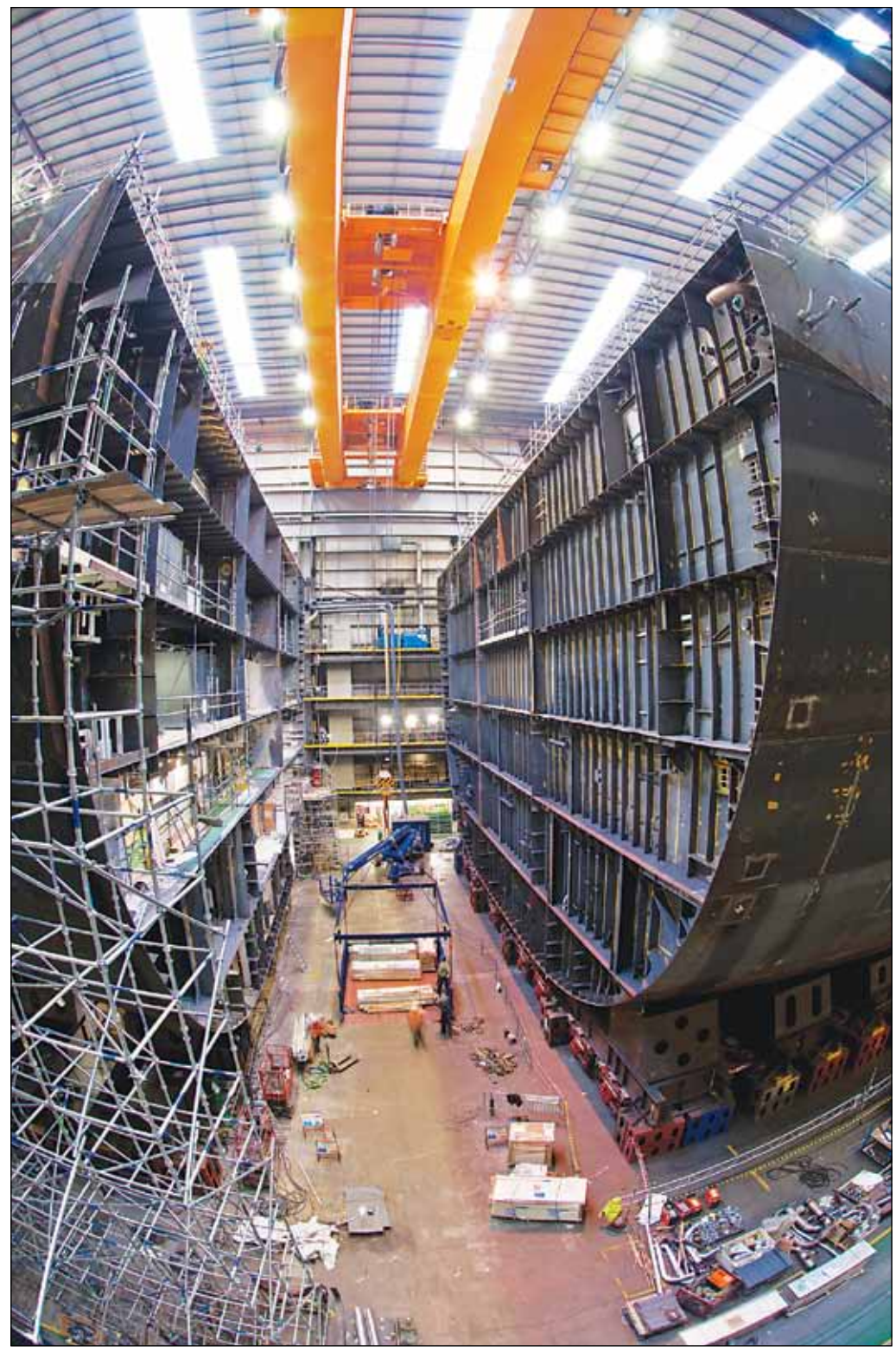
The finished leviathans will provide naval air power with a flight deck the size of three football pitches.

Second Sea Lord, Vice-Admiral Charles Montgomery, who also attended the steel-cutting ceremony, added:

"The Queen Elizabeth class will provide Britain with the means to deliver air power from the sea, wherever and whenever required, and in a stronger and more decisive form than ever before.

"They will undoubtedly prove a tremendous asset both to the Royal Navy and to the UK as a whole."





● *(Left) A propulsion unit is lowered into place on a block for HMS Queen Elizabeth at Govan. (Above) two rings are moved at BAE's Portsmouth yard*

Pictures: BAE Systems and Mike Gray

A FORCE FOR GOOD

Haslar medics reunited

THE first Royal Hospital Haslar Reunion was a sell-out, with 300 former Medical Branch ratings and QARNNS attending the weekend in Gosport, some meeting colleagues again for the first time in 45 years.

The Haslar Heritage Group arranged guided tours around the hospital and its grounds, which were much enjoyed by the 180 or so who walked around their old haunts over two days of good weather.

More than £3,200 was raised for Help for Heroes and £540 for St Dunstan's. The 2012 reunion will be held over May Bank Holiday; details from david@sudcotes.karoo.co.uk, or David Rawson, RNH Haslar Reunion Organiser, 5 Savery St, Hull HU9 3BG.

10 x 10 = half a million calories

TEN cyclists took ten days to cycle from John O'Groats to Land's End to raise money for the RNRMC.

The ten, from HMS Bulwark, averaged around 100 miles a day (about eight hours in the saddle) every day to complete the challenge in the allotted time.

Overcoming weather, hills, aching knees, punctures and a few (unplanned) dismounts, the cyclists reckoned as a team they burned off an incredible half a million calories.

Sponsored by Babcock and the Donald Gosling Foundation, they stayed at fire stations, Army training camps and RNR establishments.

The team have already raised £5,000 for the RNRMC and money is still coming in.

Matelots on the run

RUNNING one marathon is daunting enough, running ten marathons in ten days is entering the realms of Superman fantasies.

But Howard Clark achieved it, through gritted teeth, taped-up knees, swollen ankles and shin splints.

Howard, a 40-year-old lieutenant commander serving in Bahrain, was one of 13 runners selected to take part in the Brathay Marathon Challenge, which involved running a marathon around Windermere every day for ten days.

Early in the second marathon Howard suffered injuries that would have stopped any normal person in their tracks, but each day with support from his family, colleagues and a physio team, he shrugged off his pain to drag himself around the course again.

Howard said: "It was truly unbelievable, a rollercoaster of emotion, days of pain, of anguish and exceedingly challenging.

"Day five was an all-time low. I was spent, downtrodden, and desperate. I never thought I could endure such pain from injuries, take my body to the absolute limit and survive, but I did."

Howard ran this challenge during two weeks leave from Bahrain, where he trained in hot, dusty conditions very different from those around the Westmorland lake.

He has so far raised £4,000 for the Brathay Trust, the RNRMC and Help for Heroes.

To donate, visit http://uk.virginmoney.com/HowardClark and to read the full painful story see www.brathaywindermeremarathon.org.uk/blog/howard-clark-10-in10.aspx

There must be something about sailors and marathons.

In Yeovilton, LAET Kevin 'Kenny' Downer, from 845 NAS, is really going to extremes in his marathon efforts.

Not content with running four marathons in four days, Kenny, who is raising money for the RNRMC, intends to run one in the dark and one in a gas mask.

He said: "One of the marathons will be at night in recognition of the fact that my organisation, the Commando Helicopter Force, does a lot of work at night in operations in Afghanistan.

"Another will be wearing a gas mask in tribute to the arduous conditions the Royal Marines find themselves experiencing on the ground out there."

Contributions to Kenny's runs can be made via the website http://uk.virginmoneygiving.com/kevindowney

And at HMS Collingwood, PO Tony Bennett is training hard to run five marathons over the course of the year.

Tony, based in the Above Water Warfare Training Section, started with the Sussex Marathon in aid of H4H back in April.

He said: "In my haste I signed up for the Sussex Marathon without even thinking to check the course. I am now aware the Sussex is upon the South Downs and I have really got to work on a bit of hill training..."

Tony aims to complete his next four marathons in aid of the RNRMC – sponsor him at http://uk.virginmoneygiving.com/TonyBennett-H4H



● *Howard Clark finishes his tenth and final marathon*

Have a ball for the RNBT

THREE wives who wanted to keep themselves occupied while their other halves were away in HMS Albion are organising a charity ball in aid of the RNBT.

Planned for August 12 in the Crownhill Family Centre in Plymouth, it will feature a hog roast, auction, general knowledge quiz and other fun events.

Tickets cost £10 and you should contact Leanne Hall on 01752 651450 to apply, or visit Royal Naval Benevolent Trust Charity Ball on Facebook.



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Tigers pitch in

HALF-TIME in an exciting Leicester Tigers rugby match against Gloucester proved an ideal opportunity for Admiral Sir Trevor Soar, Commander-in-Chief Fleet, to publicise the work of the RNRMC and to receive a half-time presentation from the team's chairman, Peter Tom.

Admiral Soar was presented with a Tigers shirt and RM Commando top *(pictured above)*, watched by members of the Royal Marines' recruiting team who gave an abseiling display before the kick-off.

Other members of the Naval Service were there in support, including injured members of Hasler Company and the Sea Cadets, who helped raise £5,811 for the RNRMC.

In memory of Paul

EVERY summer for the past three years, the Halesowen Cricket Club has played a match against the RN in memory of submariner Paul McCann, who died in HMS Tireless in 2007. This year the match will be on Sunday July 24.

Paul's parents set up a charity in his name to help needy children in the Midlands. They also hope to hold a Spring Ball in 2012. To find out more, visit the website on www.paulmccannfundforneedychildren.com

Scenic route home

MEDICS, doctors and nurses currently based in Afghanistan are running from Bastion to Blighty – or at least, the equivalent distance, to raise money for service charities.

And they are doing it the wrong way – their 'route' takes them to the bottom of Russia, they hang a right, and run to Vladivostok, row across to Canada, run to New York, row to Portugal, run up to the English Channel via Madrid and Paris then row to Dover before a gentle trot back to Portsmouth – around 19,700 miles, all but the last ten miles to be done in their spare time when not on duty in Afghanistan.

They are planning to cover the last ten miles back in Blighty – or to be exact, running to Portsmouth to finish at HMS Victory.

See their website http://uk.virginmoneygiving.com/team/Bastion2Blighty for more details

(Long distance) walkies!

PAUSING – or should that be pawsing? – for a brief rest on the lawns of Devonport, fundraiser Peter Almond and his springer spaniel met up with two Royal Marines from Hasler Company and puppies from the MOD Police Unit.

Peter, a former defence correspondent, and his canine pal are walking from one end of the UK to the other for a new Armed Forces charity.

Hounds for Heroes was set up by ex-senior rating Allen Parton to provide injured and disabled personnel with specially-trained dogs who can help their masters/mistresses in their everyday lives.

Allen's life was transformed by his first special-trained assistance dog, Endal, and is now being helped by another, EJ – Endal Junior.

The help the dogs provided, and the realisation that other Service veterans faced the same difficulties, prompted Allen to help set up Hounds for Heroes.

The charity aims to buy, train and support five dogs initially; it costs around £25,000 a year to train a dog the 50-plus commands and recognitions that allow it to provide care for injured Servicemen, from using a cash machine to putting their owner into a recovery position.

Peter and Henry set off from Land's End on May 8 (with a send-off from a 771 NAS Sea King), destination John O'Groats via a circuitous route of 1,300 miles and an estimated arrival date in October.

Follow their progress – and support a worthy cause – via the aptly-named website www.henryandpetesverylongwalk.com. You can also follow them on Twitter at @HenryandPete

One final holiday for Ethan

NAVY wives and families have raised £1,000 to send two-year-old Ethan Hague to Euro Disney for a final holiday with his family.

Ethan, the son of PO Simon Hague and his wife Nicola, was born with a very rare condition, Tay-Sachs disease, which affects the brain and spinal cord nerve cells. The average life-span for sufferers is five years.

Military families who use the Radford Community Centre in Plymstock, Plymouth, raised the money through coffee mornings and cake-making.

Nicola said: "As nothing can be done – there is no cure or treatment – we have been making life as comfortable for Ethan as possible. The point of the holiday is to take his brother, Callum, and give him a break.

"All too often when there is a sibling needing extra attention, their brothers and sisters can feel they are losing out.

"This will show him we still love him as much as ever and also we will have happy memories of a great holiday with his brother long after he passes away."

To donate to Ethan's fund or the charity National Tay Sachs and Allied Diseases Association, visit ethansfund@live.co.uk and www.ntsad.org

Whirlwind fund-raiser

SNOOKER legend Jimmy White visited the Gibraltar Squadron while he was raising funds for the local Childline charity – and raised around £7,000 playing against some of the best pool players the Rock could throw at him.

Jimmy's visit to the Squadron came at the invitation of CPO Ian 'Muddy' Waters, a lifelong fan of 'The Whirlwind.'

With the main event over, Muddy offered to pay £100 to Childline for the privilege of playing pool against Jimmy (a match that Jimmy won – very easily) and invited him to visit the Squadron at their new Gun Wharf base –the unit has adopted Childline as their main charity.

Gunning for it

FORMER Field Gunner Nigel Ayling was planning to front up a charity field gun run in Portsmouth Naval Base on Armed Forces Days – June 25-26 – as *Navy News* went to press.

Nigel, who's been diagnosed with Parkinson's Disease, has set up a charity called Working Age Parkinsons, and is gathering about 40 ex-field gunners from all over the country to take part over the two days.

Shield of dreams

















SOUTH Pacific.

Conjures up gleaming, unspoiled beaches, their white sands reflecting the seemingly endless rays of the sun, grass-skirted natives, tropical birds with kaleidoscopic plumage, fishermen hauling their catches in from narrow wooden oar-driven boats.

And hark! What's that sound?

Wacca-wacca-wacca-wacca.

Why, it's the lesser-spotted Merlin whose 'soothing' rhythmic beat is quickly swallowed by the continuous roar – there is no other word – of a flight of MiG-29s.

Still, at least the beaches are lovely…

The Merlin comes courtesy of 829 Naval Air Squadron and their launchpad, HMS Richmond, the jets are provided by the Malaysian Air Force, just three pieces of the very large jigsaw which, when fitted together, makes Exercise Bersama Shield 11.

For the past 40 years the Commonwealth mother country has dispatched men and material to the Far East to take part in regular war games under the Five Powers Defence Arrangement.

The arrangement binds the UK with Singapore, Malaysia, New Zealand and Australia, determined to work together to support peace and stability in this part of the world…

…which, a quick glance at the map will tell you, isn't the South Pacific but the South China Sea.

That didn't stop Hollywood filming the legendary musical on the idyllic Malaysian island of Tioman which served as the hub for Bersama Shield.

Nine warships from the five nations mustered for the exercise off Tioman, joined by dozens of aircraft.

The ships – designated Task Group 657.1 – were placed under the command of Richmond and her CO Capt Mike Walliker. He was expected to forge a potent naval fighting force and guide the vessels through a series of difficult tasks – attack by air, sea and submarine, among other foes.

It was, said Capt Walliker, "a significant challenge". He continued: "Fortunately, years of previous exercise experience between the five nations – coupled with a genuine willingness to work together and share ideas – eased this task."

And then, in the middle of Bersama Shield, everything ground to a halt.

Richmond broke off the exercise and made for 3° 33' 36"N, 104° 28' 42"E – the approximate last resting place of HMS Prince of Wales.

In December 1941 the battleship – the newest in the Fleet – and her accompanying battle-cruiser HMS Repulse were the firepower of Force Z, sent to the Far East to deter Japanese aggression.

The Empire of the Rising Sun was not deterred and on December 10 1941 the two capital ships were sunk by Japanese bombers after an abortive operation to prevent the invasion of Malaysia.

More than 800 men were lost when both ships went down, including the task force commander Admiral Sir Tom Phillips, and Prince of Wales' captain Capt John Leach.

69½ years later, Richmond stopped all engines, lowered her Ensign to half mast and mustered her ship's company on the flight deck for a service of remembrance which culminated in reading the Ode of Remembrance and the laying of a wreath of poppies in the South China Sea.

The frigate's ship's company were joined for the ceremony by sailors from the Royal Australian, Malaysian, New Zealand and Republic of Singapore Navies, gathered on a hot, humid, sunny day not entirely different from the weather faced by the men of the Prince of Wales and Repulse on that fateful day in 1941.

"The act of remembrance allowed my ship's company to remember the sacrifice that was made here and honour the highest standards of the Service that they met all those years ago," said Capt Walliker.

"With this ceremony we renewed our commitment to those standards. It was particularly poignant given that Richmond, like Force Z, is currently endeavouring to ensure stability and security in the region – albeit 70 years later and in a somewhat different world order."

Just before the 'war' really hotted up, a pause. Personnel left their ships behind and moved ashore to Tioman for a day of sport, fine food and fun.

Having built up an appetite courtesy of tug-of-war, football, touch rugby and basketball, the sailors satiated their hunger thanks to several barbecues.

And then it was time to deliver some punches rather than take them.

Gunners from the UK's 148 Battery moved ashore with their Malaysian counterparts to call in the fire missions and adjust the fall of shot from the guns of the fleet.

The ships were expected to put down complex fire patterns against multiple targets on gunnery ranges off the Malaysian coast.

Bersama Shield was not limited to this 'external battle', however; the entire task group also had to win the internal struggle.

Regular flood and fire exercises were held to hone damage-control skills and served as the prelude to more complex battle damage scenarios, all of which were overlaid with air raids and other external events for added realism.

From guns pounding, jets roaring and ships crashing through the warm waters off Malaysia to a day of (relative) relaxation on Tioman, Bersama Shield was characterised by "a spirit of co-operation", said Capt Walliker.

"Bersama Shield represented a significant building block in further developing military co-operation between maritime and air force units from Australia, Malaysia, New Zealand, Singapore, and the United Kingdom

"It demonstrated how regional powers can come together to provide collective security and stability."

Richmond is due back in her Portsmouth home at the end of this month after nearly seven months away; she devoted the first half of her deployment to dealing with piracy off Somalia.

pictures: la(phot) caroline davies, frpu east



Brigadier flies off to civvy life

AFTER almost two years in command of the busiest military air station in the UK, Brig Mark Noble RM has handed over the reins of HMS Heron and started life on Civvy Street.

Military and civilian staff lined the roads of the air station to wave him off after a short leaving ceremony at the Nuffield sports bar, where Brig Noble toasted the future of Naval aviation.

His final departure was in a Junglie Sea King *(pictured above by LA(Phot) Vicki Benwell)*.

Shortly before leaving, Brig Noble said: "Although we are experiencing testing times, the spirit and ethos of the Fleet Air Arm continues unabated at RNAS Yeovilton.

"The character, dedication and professionalism of the people I have commanded constantly highlight the effectiveness of Naval aviation and I am confident that this will remain for many years to come.

"It has been a pleasure and a privilege to have had command of HMS Heron."

Brig Noble is succeeded by Cdre Paul Chivers, who has a long record of flying in Lynx helicopters, and commanded frigate HMS Lancaster.

Seahawk joins carnival

MEMBERS of HMS Seahawk Volunteer Band, together with players from other Royal Navy volunteer bands, took part in the parade at the Cologne Carnival.

For over 20 years volunteer bandsmen and women from various RN establishments have travelled to Germany for the Rose Monday Parade, joining up with hundreds of other bands, floats, horses, dancers and walking carnival groups to march through the streets of the city as part of the celebrations, which lead up to Ash Wednesday.

More than a million people attended the 6.5km *Rosenmontag* Procession, the main event of a city carnival that began in the Middle Ages and has become one of Europe's biggest street festivals.

In 1989 a German engineering officer served at RNAS Yeovilton in Somerset as part of an exchange scheme between the Royal Navy and the German Navy.

During his time at Yeovilton, he played in the station band; the idea of the RN Volunteer Bands taking part in the Carnival was born, and has continued ever since.

The Seahawk Band is always keen to attract new players, and anyone interested can contact the Culdrose Bandmaster on 01326 557210 or Culdrose-band@mod.uk



● *Kev Strachan, Sarah Watson, Debbie Williams, Band C/Sgt Nev Dednum (Bandmaster), Terry Broughal and Bob Wilton in Cologne*

Picture: LA(Phot) Vicki Benwell

Landowners thanked for Junglie support

ROYAL Navy Sea King helicopters and personnel from the Commando Helicopter Force (CHF) based at RNAS Yeovilton played host to farmers and landowners to thank them for allowing the aircraft to train on their land.

CHF helicopters – known as Junglies – regularly use remote landing sites throughout the South West and away from Yeovilton and its satellite airfield at Merryfield, near Ilminster.

These operations are invariably conducted at night, in all weather conditions, enabling aircrews to practice manoeuvres and tactical landings into relatively unfamiliar areas.

Such training is an essential part of the Force's ability to ensure they are ready to meet the challenges they face when operating in the searing heat and dust of Afghanistan or on the rolling decks of ships like HMS Ocean and HMS Albion, currently deployed on exercises and operations in the Mediterranean.

"Landowners' Day enables the aircrew to personally thank everyone involved," said Lt Jon Crawford, a Mobile Air Operation Officer who is a key player in CHF training.

"The landowners are extremely supportive and receive no financial reward for offering their land, but always look forward to this informative day."

Two Sea Kings were available to fly the guests over the Somerset Levels, which provided an opportunity to demonstrate the flying skills required of a Commando helicopter pilot, and later they could take a closer look at the aircraft, weapons and other military hardware on display.

Picture: LA(Phot) Chris Mumby



● *A final snapshot is taken as a group of visitors leave their Sea King at Merryfield*

Culdrose highlights hunt for Bismarck

SEVEN decades ago today the Royal Navy avenged the shock loss of HMS Hood by sending Hitler's flagship to the bottom of the Atlantic after a ruthless chase.

Now personnel at RNAS Culdrose have been commemorating the Fleet Air Arm's role in the legendary wartime action – and teaching local youngsters of the sacrifices made.

Children from schools around the Helston area were invited into the Cornish air station to learn about the deeds of 1941, when a handful of crews in obsolete Swordfish biplanes attacked the battleship on her maiden deployment.

The leviathan had dispatched HMS Hood, pride of the inter-war Navy, in a matter of minutes in the Denmark Strait; Britain's newest battleship, HMS Prince of Wales, was forced to pull out of the battle because of damage sustained.

In two of the most dramatic days of naval warfare in the 20th century, the Royal Navy tried to hunt down the Bismarck, which in turn was determined to make for the coast of France.

Swordfish found but failed to sink the 50,000-tonne battleship – but a strike on her rudder from a torpedo caused the Bismarck to career out of control and it was sunk on the morning of May 27 1941 by the big guns of the Home Fleet which gathered for the kill.

The action has become the stuff of legend from numerous books to a famous feature film *Sink the Bismarck!*, but it's probably unknown to the youngest generation.

So staff from the Fleet Air Arm Museum decamped from their home in Yeovilton to Culdrose to organise activities.

The hangar of 820 Naval Air Squadron – one of the formations which took part in the hunt for Hitler's battleship – was transformed into an education area, decorated with 1940s memorabilia, and even equipped with an air raid shelter and NAAFI building.

Film shows and talks were laid on and children were able to talk with today's Fleet Air Arm crews about their work.

The highlight of the activities was building replica Swordfish from balsa wood and 'launching' them from a moving deck.

For grown-ups, there were the 'Bismarck Games' – inter-departmental challenges and a 1940s night with a screening of the 1960 film starring Kenneth More.

The air station has also hosted lectures by experts from the Royal College of Defence Studies on the importance of the sinking of the Bismarck and, most importantly of all, hosted Swordfish pilot Lt Cdr 'Jock' Moffat.

The veteran aviator is credited with dropping the torpedo which scored the hit on the Bismarck's rudder – although Mr Moffat has always rather played down his role in the attack.



● *Lucy Tyreman with C/Sgt Gordon Carter*

Sound students

YOUNG musicians from the Humphry Davy School in Penzance – a specialist music college – visited HMS Raleigh for a masterclass with Plymouth bandies.

The group of 13 students was split into vocalist, string and brass sections, and after training and rehearsing with the Royals they came together for a final concert.

RM Director of Music Capt Richard Long said: "The band thoroughly enjoyed making music with the students.

"We are committed to bringing music to the community as well as to Service personnel and this event allowed us to give something back to the general public.

"The students were all very talented and extremely enthusiastic."

They were wonderful, darling

LEADING Naval thesps stepped into the limelight when prizes were handed out at the RN Theatre Association awards.

The red carpet was rolled out for four of the five RNTA clubs at a ceremony which culminated in the presentation of the Bulawayo Trophy for best overall production to HMS Collingwood.

This year's festival featured four very different productions and was once again adjudicated by Chris Jaeger, chief executive of Worcester Live.

Kicking off with the Sultan Theatre Group's interpretation of Louis de Berniere's *Sunday Morning at the Centre of the World*, audiences were then treated to *The Three Musketeers* by the Real Salad Company (Collingwood), *The Canterbury Tales* by the Admirals' Players (Excellent) and Gibraltar's Trafalgar Players staged *Murder in Play*.

The awards night was attended by more than 100 members of the RNTA and welcomed the Association's new president, Rear Admiral David Steel, who awarded the President's Cup to Cdr Tom Mills, association's treasurer for the past ten years and is shortly due to retire.

Chris Jaeger, with the help of the RNTA committee, presented the awards in traditional Oscar fashion (minus the tearful acceptance speeches).

As well as winning the festival overall, Collingwood RSC also walked away with **best director** (Chris Blatch-Gainey), whilst **best actress** was awarded to Tracy Tomlin (Sultan) and **best actor** to Mike Howell (Admirals' Players).

Other awards presented included **best supporting actor:** Phil Pennington (Collingwood); **best supporting actress:** Ashleigh Motley (Collingwood); **best male newcomer:** Alan Davies (Trafalgar); **best female newcomer:** Sarah Donovan (Trafalgar); **Doug Craig award for best cameo performance:** Martin Webb (Sultan).

Technical and production awards went to: **best technical achievement:** Trafalgar; **best stage set:** Ralph Dinnick and Rob Jones (Sultan); **best lighting:** Lyndon Ford (Collingwood); **best sound:** Chloe Philo and Aaron Parker (Collingwood); **best costume:** Bex Hannigan (Collingwood); **best make up, hair and wigs:** Tania Watt, Lisa Pitman and Angela Goble (Admirals' Players).

The RNTA welcomes new members, both budding actors, directors and stage crew.

In the coming months there will be workshops covering directing and choreography, auditions for pantomimes and, most excitingly, preparations for the summer 2012 production of Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing* in conjunction with the RSC's Open Stages.

Anyone interested in joining the RNTA should email rntheatreassociation@gmail.com



● *Chris Jaeger (right) hands the Bulawayo Cup for best production to Steve Johns of the Real Salad Company (HMS Collingwood), watched by other RN Theatre Association award winners*

Siblings meet

RFA MOUNTS Bay's deployment on Exercise Cougar presented the opportunity for siblings to be reunited for the first time in more than a year.

Chef Vickey Collier was able to take a break from her duties in the amphibious assault ship's galley to welcome her brother on board.

Senior Aircraftman Technician Andy Graham is currently attached to the Joint Engineering Squadron C41 at RAF Akrotiri in Cyprus, and flew out to the island shortly after his wedding in January 2010, the last time the siblings saw each other.

The 24-hour visit was arranged by Chief Officer David Hulse RFA, who said it was nice to show the ship's appreciation for the work done by Vickey and the other chefs on board, which it crucial to morale.



Former hall porter mourned

STAN Mills, once a familiar and welcoming face at the hall porter's desk in the wardroom of HMS Dryad and latterly HMS Nelson, died in late April.

Before becoming a hall porter Stan *(pictured above)* served as a steward for more than 30 years in the Royal Navy, having joined HMS Ganges at the age of 18.

That service provided a wealth of stories and he never forgot his roots as a steward; as hall porter, Stan became a confidante and friend to many.

Neither did he lose his love of the Royal Navy – upon retirement he became involved in the Monitor gun platform project in Portsmouth Historic Dockyard.

Other interests included sea angling from his boat, having a flutter on the horses, tending an allotment (he was chairman of the local allotment association) and spending more time with his childhood sweetheart wife Sheila, their five children and many grandchildren.



● *AB 'Tiddly' Winks brushes up on his oral hygiene drill, with advice from LDN Vicky Hobby, LDH Jo Harris and Surg Lt (D) Amelia Pedrick during the dental team's visit to HMS Diamond as part of National Smile Month*

Picture: LA(Phot) Darby Allen

Diamond's dental drill

DO YOU know the dental drill? The men and woman of HMS Diamond do now.

The Type 45 destroyer welcomed a team from the Dental Department of HMS Nelson as part of National Smile Month, a campaign to promote good oral hygiene.

The key messages this year were:

Brush your teeth twice a day with a fluoride toothpaste;

Cut down on the frequency of sugary drinks and snacks;

Visit your dentist regularly – at least once a year.

The visit to Diamond was organised with the help of POMA Simon Minett, and a willing volunteer was found to wear the 'Big Cig' costume.

Surg Lt (D) Amelia Pedrick had arranged for a visit from a toothbrush company representative, who talked about their products and left a range of sample toothbrushes.

Leading Dental Hygienist Jo Harris also contacted different toothpaste companies who sent samples, all of which were useful to make up goodie bags for the ship's company.

"LDH Harris put together information for the health promotion board which is displayed in our waiting room, and we also took this display onboard the ship," said Leading Dental Nurse Vicky Hobby.

"The board included information on the three main messages from National Smile Month.

"On the day myself, LDH Harris and Surg Lt (D) Pedrick set up our health promotion board in the classroom onboard HMS Diamond.

"We got a few funny looks as we walked around dressed in our National Smile Month T-shirts and dental trousers – a few thought we were onboard to do dental check ups and stayed away...

"We also had some curious personnel wanting to know what we were all about.

"Our willing volunteer was AB 'Tiddly' Winks, who dressed up in the Big Cig costume whilst we had some photos taken on the upper deck.

"We then went to the classroom and gave a short presentation to several small groups of personnel.

"This included correct brushing and flossing techniques, the importance of brushing twice a day for two minutes and reducing the frequency of sugary snacks and drinks.

"We then allowed time for questions from the group and we were asked a number of questions one of the more frequent being 'why do my gums bleed?'

"We explained that there are a number of factors that cause this, but the main reason is not cleaning your teeth properly.

"We explained that brushing your teeth correctly by placing your toothbrush at a 45-degree angle to your tooth and cleaning right up to the gum-line, and also flossing correctly, meant the bleeding should stop in about a week.

"We gave every person that came to the presentation a goodie bag – the only way to get matelots to come and listen to a presentation is to give them something for free.

"The bag included a toothbrush, toothpaste, balloon, a pen and leaflets on healthy snacking and oral hygiene.

"It also had in some disclosing tablets which are used to help identify plaque in the mouth.

"They work by staining plaque in the mouth blue, so I'm sure they were given out as sweets around the ship, to personnel who didn't attend..."

LDN Hobby continued: "The visit on HMS Diamond was really worthwhile and we feel the ship's company learned a lot from our presentation.

"It was a fun day and a chance to get out of the surgery and meet some new faces.

"Prevention is always better than treatment and education is a step in the right direction to prevention – the rest is up to the individual."

Top trophy for Observer

A TOP RN Observer with the Lynx Helicopter Force has been awarded a coveted trophy.

Lt Jayne Green of 702 NAS received the Beach Trophy during a Wings Parade at Culdrose, home of RN Observer training.

The trophy, awarded annually to the Qualified Observer Instructor achieving the best re-categorisation to B1 status, commemorates Lt Cdr Alastair 'Bill' Beach, who died in a road traffic accident.

An exemplary role model and superb instructor himself, Bill was not only responsible for training many Observers when he served on 750 NAS, but during an appointment as the Chief Observer Instructor in the Flying Training School he was also responsible for the initial training and mentoring of a large number of the Royal Navy's Qualified Observer Instructors.

Lt Green said: "It is a tremendous honour to receive this prestigious award in memory of such a fine instructor."

Cardiff date

A GROUP of 14 Cardiff City fans from RNR unit HMS Cambria provided a small guard and escorted match officials at Cardiff City's home Championship match against Portsmouth.

The Welsh Reservists had the chance to chat to manager Dave Jones (who since departed in the wake of the Bluebirds' defeat in the end-of-season play-offs) as well as talking to some of the players after the match, which the home side won 3-0.

Firing on all cylinders

FIELD gunners at HMS Neptune put on a performance for workers at Clyde Naval Base when they held a public run ahead of the Navy's Field Gun competition.

Around 60 base workers gathered at Faslane's helicopter pad to cheer their team on – and the encouragement paid off, with the Neptune gunners breaking the one minute 30 second barrier for the first time.

Master of Ceremonies for the event was Base Warrant Officer WO Bob Cawley.

"There are 18 members of the team, and eight of them are lifting the equivalent of a large family saloon car," he said.

"We had two full-pace runs, but before that we slowed the proceedings down to show the spectators the different stages of the process, including assembling the limber, wheels and the gun, not to mention firing it."

Starbuck's breakfast party

THE command team of HMS Sutherland are pictured celebrating the announcement that the Meritorious Service Medal has been awarded to their Executive Warrant Officer, WO1 Tony Starbuck.

The celebratory breakfast took place on the bridge roof of the Type 23 frigate at the NATO Refuelling Jetty in Souda Bay, Crete – WO Starbuck, who has served with distinction since 1979, is second left in the picture.

"I was just doing my job – however, I do feel honoured and very privileged to receive such an award, which has been quite humbling," said Tony, who was quickly back to the 'day job' of ensuring the Mighty Clan continues to perform sterling service.

The frigate is currently deployed on Exercise Cougar as part of the Response Force Task Group, and recently supported the Apache attack helicopter assaults on Libyan Government forces from HMS Ocean in the Mediterranean.



Decades beneath the sea

TWO submariners who will shortly retire from the Flag Officer Sea Training (FOST) organisation at Clyde Naval Base received recognition for a combined Navy career spanning 85 years.

WO Jerry Jervis joined up in 1966 when the rum tot still existed, England held the World Cup and sailors counted their wages in pounds, shillings and pence.

By the time WO Peter Green joined in 1971 the UK had gone decimal, man had walked on the Moon, England had lost the World Cup – and the Navy had lost the tot.

Jerry transferred to the Silent Service in 1970, starting as a lift operator on Admiralty Floating Dock 60, then serving in the entire Resolution class from 1974-89 before switching to FOST.

Peter's first boat was HMS Revenge, where he spent ten years, followed by four years in HMS Spartan, another stint in Revenge then HMS Sovereign – his career spanned the entire Swiftsure-class fleet.

Both men received valedictory certificates from Director Submarines, Rear Admiral Simon Lister.

OBE – one year on

A NAVY officer awarded the OBE last year in recognition of exceptional performance has now picked up his badge.

Capt Paul Shawcross appeared on the 2010 Queen's Birthday Honours List last year for his work as Deputy Commander of the Commando Helicopter Force at Yeovilton, at a time when the Junglies were at the forefront of operations in Afghanistan.

But owing to his deployment to Afghanistan as Commander of the UK Joint Aviation Group, responsible for all UK helicopter operations, he was unable to receive his award until now – the badge and ribbon were presented by the Prince of Wales at Buckingham Palace.

Key change

A NEW Bandmaster has taken over the baton of the 35-strong HMS Neptune Volunteer Band.

C/Sgt Zoe O'Goreman, originally from Portsmouth, has moved west from MOD Caledonia to succeed C/Sgt Anne Millar, leaving her role as French horn player with the RM Band Scotland.

And Anne moves the opposite direction, joining Zoe's former outfit.

'Worthy of remembering'

THE years pass, memories fade, the pain lessens – but deep down it's always there.

The emotion of the moment is too much for C/Sgt Young of 4 Assualt Squadron Royal Marines as he, comrades and HMS Bulwark shipmates pay their respects to commandos killed in the Falklands.

Twenty-nine years to the day earlier, six forebears from Bulwark's predecessor HMS Fearless were killed when landing craft Foxtrot 4 was attacked by Argentine aircraft in Choiseul Sound.

By then the small craft and its crew, led by C/Sgt Brian Johnston RM, had carved their names in history thanks to deeds during the San Carlos landings.

At the height of hostilities on May 24 1982, the colour sergeant brought his craft alongside the stricken frigate HMS Antelope and began to assist with fire fighting and the off load of survivors.

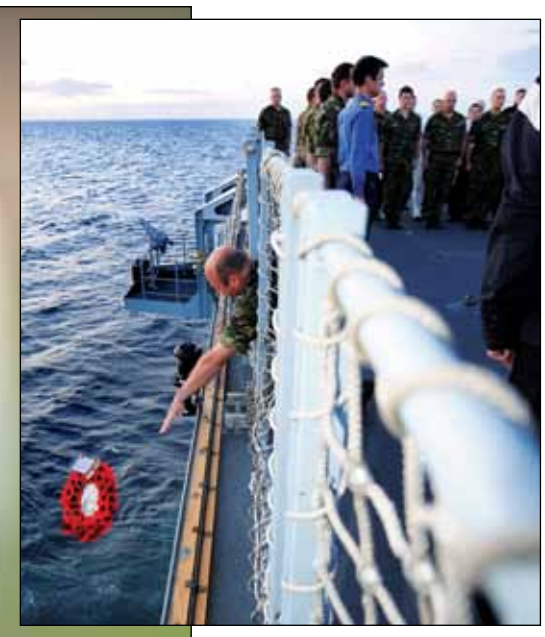
Despite the severity of the fire and the threat of an unexploded bomb, the senior NCO remained alongside until he had successfully completed the evacuation, rescuing over 100 Antelope sailors (the ship subsequently blew up – a terrifying moment captured by an iconic photograph). For his actions, C/Sgt Johnson earned the Queen's Gallantry Medal.

Nearly 30 years later, 4 Assault Squadron Royal Marines has a new home on Bulwark and one of its landing craft is named Foxtrot Juliet – J for Johnston and his comrades.

Each year Bulwark pauses to remember the men of F4 and 2011 was no exception as she conducted trials off the South Coast following her recent refit.

The service of remembrance, led by the ship's chaplain Rev David Roissetter, gave 4 Assault Squadron a chance to remember former colleagues who have fought and died whilst undertaking a similar role, working from an amphibious ship with their craft, just as they do today.





● *(Left) A tearful C/Sgt Young remembers fallen comrades while (above) a fellow Royal Marine casts a wreath into the Channel on behalf of HMS Bulwark's ship's company*

Pictures: LA(Phot) Martin Carney, HMS Bulwark

There was added to poignancy to this year's commemorations, however, as the ship also paused to remember four men of 42 Commando who have recently lost their lives in Afghanistan.

"The heroism, bravery and sense of duty shown by the crew of Foxtrot 4 in the Falklands is something that is worthy of remembering and sets an example to today's landing craft crews. It is something that makes all RM and RN personnel proud to serve in 4 ASRM and HMS Bulwark, following in the footsteps of a previous generation of amphibious specialists," said the assault ship's amphibious operations officer, Lt Col Jim McLaren RM.

HMS Bulwark begins Operational Sea Training at the end of June in preparation of taking on her new role of Britain's flagship and on-call assault ship later this year in place of her sister HMS Albion, currently serving east of Suez.

In the Falklands themselves, sailors from HMS Clyde, the patrol ship which protects the South Atlantic islands all year round, taking part in Landing Day commemorations at San Carlos, the remote natural harbour where the battle to re-take the Falklands moved ashore.

On May 21 1982 this isolated spot on East Falkland, some 50 miles from the capital Stanley, troops were put ashore to oust the invader.

Over the coming four or five days the Argentine Air Force made an all-out effort to stop the landing of men and material, at a heavy cost to themselves and to the Royal Navy: HMS Ardent and Antelope were both lost in the Battle for San Carlos.

Nearly three decades on and sailors from Clyde restored the memorial to the Type 21 frigates on the top of Campito; it had been damaged by the fierce Falklands wind on its high point overlooking the water.

In typical Falklands weather, the repair party set off in sunshine but were soon lashed by wind and rain which made the climb up Campito and the subsequent fixing and raising of the memorial somewhat challenging.

At the same time other sailors from Clyde carried out some running repairs on the memorial in nearby Port San Carlos to the crew of a Royal Marines Gazelle helicopter shot down during the battle for the beachhead.

With memorials restored, the ship's company joined islanders and other military personnel, plus Governor Nigel Haywood, for a service of remembrance at Blue Beach Cemetery.

The *Last Post* sounded across the bay before silence descended for two minutes and wreaths were laid, followed by the *Naval Hymn* and *National Anthem*.

Foyle's warship

FISHERY protection ship HMS Severn made a rare trip up the River Foyle to take part in a five-day maritime festival in the heart of Londonderry.

Berthed at Queen's Quay right next to the city centre and with the Republic of Ireland's oldest warship LÉ Emer – as it's a prefix which doesn't often appear in these pages we'll spell it out, *Long Éireannach* or Irish ship – outboard, the RN's No.1 cod squadders (they hold the Fleet's award for their proficiency) took part in numerous cultural and public events.

With ship visits to Northern Ireland still relatively infrequent, there was a good turnout during the two days the River-class ship was open to the public (despite the poor weather, 5,400 people crossed the gangway – not bad from a city which numbers 85,000 souls).

Once on board visitors chatted with ship's company about the role both of fishery protection squadron and the wider duties of the Senior Service and were given a chance to aim (but not fire) the main 20mm cannon.

In addition there were some official duties to carry out while in Londonderry: a reception for over 100 people (three times the size of the ship's company) which was attended by the Lord Lieutenant , Dr Donal Keegan, MP Mark Durkan, the city's mayor Cllr Colum Eastwood, the deputy commander of 38 (Irish) Brigade Col David Russell-Parsons, officers from the Emer and local religious leaders.

Also at the reception were the crew of the yacht Derry-Londonderry which will carry the city's name(s) around the globe later this year on the Clipper race.

Their vessel was blessed during the festival, an event attended by Severn's sailors and five-time Olympic gold medal winner Sir Steve Redgrave (who's used to rather smaller vessels than the 68ft cutter).

Also on the sporting front, the Severns were challenged to a game of football by the Emer's slightly-larger ship's company. In blustery and wet conditions (ie typically Irish…) the Emerald Islanders prevailed 4-2.

There was a chance for some downtime too, with some of the sailors making for the Giant's Causeway, others for the nearby Bushmills Distillery (strangely, a popular visit…) before Severn resumed her fishery patrols.

As she did, she came across the clipper yacht making her way through the Irish Sea for the south coast of England.

From Londonderry to Newport, Severn's affiliated port (indeed, it was the fourth time CO Lt Cdr Catherine Jordan had visited the Welsh city).

The ship spent six days in southeast Wales after collecting the city's mayor Cllr Margaret Cornelius and her consort Ken Cornelius off Pembrokeshire for the passage to Newport.

Once berthed, Severn hosted a lunch party for local dignitaries before a later party for invited guests from the local area.

Sea Cadets from TS Resolute and Malvern SCC, The Princes' Trust and 104 RA (V) Regiment were all given a look around, while Fairoak Nursery, St Michael's RC and Bassaleg schools either visited the ship – or were treated to a visit from members of the ship's company.

The highlight of the ship's stay was participation in Newport's Civic Parade, at which the sailors exercised their right to march bearing arms, a right Severn has been afforded since receiving the Freedom of the City in 2006.

The last act of the visit saw Lt Cdr Catherine Jordan hand over the 'reins' to her successor, Lt Cdr Marcus Hember, who promptly paid his first official call on Cllr Cornelius.

"We always receive the warmest welcome and it is undoubtedly the highlight of the ship's calendar," said Lt Cdr Jordan.

"I am very sad to be leaving Severn, and the special bond she has with Newport, but thrilled that I managed another visit before I handed over."

Top images on display

THE public can see the very best of Royal Navy photography with a rare exhibition in the capital – but for one day only.

The finest images of life in the Senior Service from the past 12 months – at home and abroad, in war and peace – go on display at Trinity House in London.

Members of the Royal Navy Photographic Branch – from leading hands up to veteran warrant officers – will also be on hand to explain their day-to-day work around the globe.

The photographic branch is one of the smallest in the Navy – around 100 sailors – and is split between intelligence experts who pore over imagery looking for information which will help front-line operations and the more traditional role of taking pictures.

The images of the latter can be seen in national newspapers, news wires, the RN website and are a mainstay of *Navy News* – although most of photographers' time is spent on intelligence gathering and routine work such as photographing machinery parts rather than capturing PR imagery.

The July 1 exhibition comes just 24 hours after the Peregrine Trophy awards – the 'Oscars' for the photographic branch where, among other titles, the Royal Navy Photographer of the Year and best unit are named.

The latter receives the Peregrine Trophy itself, named for the Sussex air station once the home of RN photography.

The contest is judged by some of the best photographers and picture editors in the land, and they'll also be casting an eye over the video footage Royal Navy camera teams have recorded; it is regularly used by the BBC and other news outlets, as well as documentary makers.

The exhibition runs from 10am until 4pm at Trinity House, next to Tower Hill tube station, and entry is free.

King of Cornish skies

BY THE time you read this four new twin-prop aircraft should be sitting in the hangar of 750 Naval Air Squadron at Culdrose as the King Air 350 Avenger makes its debut in Cornwall.

The King Airs are the next-generation trainers for Fleet Air Arm and will prepare Observers for front-line duties in the Navy's entire helicopter fleet for the next quarter of a century.

They were due to be delivered to their new home as *Navy News* went to press, following an official unveiling at Bournemouth Airport.

The aircraft replaces the veteran Jetstreams, which completed their 30-plus-year training mission in the spring.

Although the King Air looks similar to its predecessor externally, inside it's a world away with hi-tech digital displays, touch screens, plush seats and carpeting… and a loo just in case trainee Observers (or instructors) are caught short.

On a typical sortie in the hands of 750 NAS, two students and two instructors, plus one pilot, will head out into the Western Approaches, where the basics of being a Fleet Air Arm Observer are taught over 14 weeks during the Culdrose element of training.

Despite the historic title, an Observer is really a mission and weapons specialist; the Merlin/Sea King/Lynx pilot flies the helicopter, but it's down to the Observer to 'fight it' – navigate, track and, if necessary, attack targets.

"Although an Observer is an historical title, he remains integral to today's Fleet Air Arm. The complexity of Naval warfare means you need someone to fly the aircraft – and someone to fight it. The strength comes from them working together," said Capt Toby Williamson, Culdrose's Commanding Officer (and an Observer).

The final elements of Observer training, learning specific weapons systems, is taught at the Merlin/Sea King/Lynx conversion units (824/849/702 NAS respectively).

The more which can be taught on the King Air means less time is required on the front-line conversion squadrons – which will save money. An hour's flying in a helicopter is roughly twice the cost of the same time in a twin-prop.

So with the gap between what instructors could impart in the Jetstream with its ageing systems and what was needed by the front line widening, and with the aircraft at the end of their working lives, the MOD signed a £52m deal with Ascent Flight Training to replace them.

Over the past 12 months the innards of the King Airs have been torn out by Cobham Aviation in Bournemouth and replaced with the consoles and computers the RN needs to train its Observers.

In addition to the real world appearing on the colourful computer display in front of a trainee Observer's eyes, the instructor can superimpose extra targets and weather conditions – something not possible on the Jetstream – to make things more challenging.

For all the impressive kit inside the King Air – it's still a tight fit, you cannot stand up straight inside the cabin – relatively minor tweaks are just as important.

"On a Jetstream, if you wanted the pilot to simulate a failure or something, you'd have to go up to them, or pass a codeword or a note. It couldn't have been more obvious. That gives the game away to the students," explains former RN Observer John Bramwell, now the Ascent Station Manager for the King Airs.

"On here you can talk to the pilots over the intercom without the students hearing. Simple things like that can make all the difference. Students need to believe they're operating in a real environment, that makes learning so much greater."

The first Observers to use the King Airs are currently going through 703 NAS at Barkston Heath in Lincolnshire, where they learn the basics of flight. They'll arrive in Culdrose in September with 750 NAS, which will spend the summer training its instructors in the use of the new aircraft in Cornish skies.

As for the old Jetstreams, they've largely been broken up – the parts of some are being used to teach the basics of engineering in Norfolk.

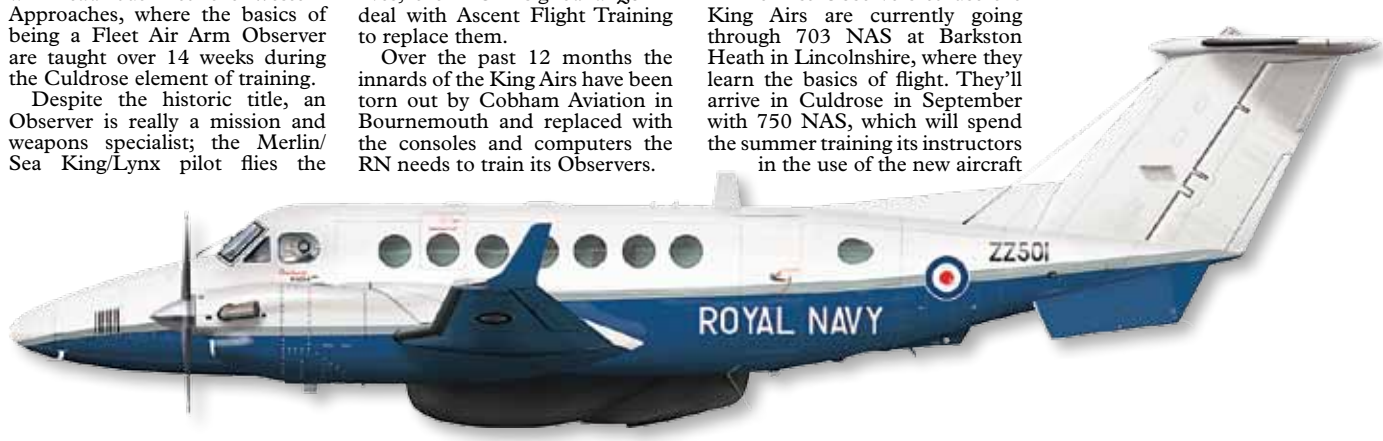
"Sentimentality means I'll miss the old Jetstream," says Mr Bramwell, despite its "extra-strong-mint-sized buttons.

"They're the aircraft I trained on, they set me on the path to being an Observer and I had a great time.

"But these really are a step forward. Being an Observer now is a different game. So we have a new aircraft with a new system. But the squadron's all about the people, the ethos. That's still the same."

If you were wondering why we've 'capped up' Observer throughout this article it's to differentiate between an observer – someone who's simply looking on – and an Observer, a highly-trained Fleet Air Arm aviator with a century's tradition behind him/her.

■ The print below by Berry Vissers/Squadron Prints celebrates the King Air's entry into service with 750 NAS; it is available from www.squadronprints.com



Harrier group get-together

AN inaugural get-together of the newly-formed **Harrier Force Association** (HFA) will be held at the old OCU hangar at RAF Wittering on Saturday July 16.

The HFA was established to provide a focal point for anyone associated with the aircraft or its operation throughout its 40 years of service.

For more details see www.hfassoc.org

Aviation service

A MEMORIAL service was held at **Eastchurch** on the Isle of Sheppey to honour the memory of the birth of Naval aviation.

The service was attended by past and serving members of the Fleet Air Arm, who witnessed a fly-past by a Sea Fury and a modern Lynx helicopter.

Cdre Martin Westwood, Assistant Chief of Naval Aviation, said: "It is vitally important to remember where we have come from and today we remember the bravery of the early pioneers and we honour Eastchurch and the Isle of Sheppey in giving birth to the Fleet Air Arm."

Extra reunion

THE Norbreck Castle Hotel was the venue for the reunion and AGM of the **HMS Loch Fada Association**, attended by 77 shipmates and guests.

A coach tour of Liverpool was arranged for the final day, during which the association secretary bumped into an old shipmate from his days in HMS Bristol 30 years ago – 'Tiny' Height was at the **HMS Decoy** reunion in Southport at the time.

Frank rewarded

THE **City of Glasgow** branch has honoured S/M Frank Halliday by making him Honorary Life Vice President of the branch.

S/M Frank has served as chairman for 14 years and was a member since the branch was founded in 1996.

Doors thrown open at Headquarters

MORE than 30 shipmates attended an open day at RNA Headquarters in Portsmouth.

The event, the first of the year, saw Association members welcomed to the offices in Semaphore Tower, allowing them to meet the administrative team which keeps the RNA ticking over.

They talked to HQ staff – General Secretary Paul Quinn, Assistant General Secretaries Nigel Huxtable and Phil Shuttleworth (who has been helping out on a temporary basis) and Financial Controller Michelle Bainbridge.

S/M Quinn briefed the visitors on how HQ operates, using the Semaphore Tower Conference Room, which will be used for future National Council meetings.

After lunch and a drink in the Semaphore Arms, the visitors enjoyed a boat trip in the harbour, provided free of charge in the Queen's Harbourmaster's launch.

HQ is holding a further open day on Friday September 16 starting at 11am for about 90 minutes. Places are limited and available on a first-come, first-served basis. Please register your interest with Nigel on 023 9272 3747.



● *Shipmates observe all due ceremony during a little sea-time in Portsmouth Harbour during their visit to RNA Headquarters*



A family affair at Conference

NATIONAL Conference 2011 at Plymouth was a proud and special event for the West family when three members represented their individual branches as standard bearers.

The three were Frank West, a former Chief TASI from **Scarborough** branch, his brother John West, a former Chief GI from **Cork and County** branch and their cousin Albert West, a former Chief ME(M) from **Luton and Dunstable** branch.

This proud Naval family, who originated in Cork, took time out to visit the Naval Memorial on Plymouth Hoe, on which is recorded the name of Frank and John's father, CPO Telegraphist JC West, who lost his life when he went down in the cruiser HMS Bonaventure.

The photograph shows *(from left to right)* Frank, John and Albert.

Service honours Hood

A SERVICE has been held in Portsmouth to mark 70 years since the loss of the Mighty Hood.

The battlecruiser was the pride of the Fleet between the wars, but was destroyed in a duel with the German ships Bismarck and Prinz Eugen in the Denmark Strait on May 24 1941, with the loss of all but three of her ship's company of 1,418.

Sailors who once served in the warship – four veterans aged between 91 and 95 – joined the families of victims of the sinking at a ceremony at Portsmouth Naval Memorial on Southsea Common.

Also there were a platoon of ratings from HMS Collingwood – the Fareham training establishment has a link with Hood as its medical centre bears the battlecruiser's name, and contains the Roll of Honour bearing the names of the ship's company.

The service was led by former Chaplain of the Fleet, the Ven John Green, and wreaths were laid by the **HMS Hood Association** and members of the families of victims.

Also attending were representatives of foreign navies – alongside British matelots on board Hood were sailors from Canada, Australia, New Zealand, India, Poland and France.

And more recent members of the Hood fraternity at the memorial were documentary maker Rob White and David Mearns, the marine scientist who discovered the wreck of the Hood.

The chaplain told those gathered that Service veterans are not drawn together by a love of violence, but by the depth of their comradeship.

And by remembering the loss of the Hood, he continued, we remember the huge cost of war, and that it was not specifically the brave who gave their tomorrow for our today, but 'ordinary' people who were doing their duty and paid the ultimate price.

£50 PRIZE PUZZLE



THE mystery ship in our May edition *(right)* was HMS Rocket.

And M. Oldham, of Exmouth in Devon, was the winner of our £50 prize for identifying her.

This month's mystery ship *(pictured above)* was completed by Fleetlands in the 1950s and is shown departing from the Gulf.

One of her most memorable moments came off Cyprus in 1959 when she intercepted a Turkish boat smuggling ammunition – two cases were recovered before the Deniz sank after being scuttled by her crew.

Our mystery ship was broken up in 1971 – what was her name?

We have removed her pennant number in the picture.

Complete the coupon and send it to Mystery Picture, *Navy News*, HMS Nelson, Portsmouth PO1 3HH. Coupons giving the correct answer



will go into a prize draw to establish a winner. Closing date for entries is August 12 2011. More than one entry can be submitted but photocopies cannot be accepted. Do not include anything else in your envelope: no correspondence can be entered into and no entry returned.

The winner will be announced in our September edition. The competition is not open to *Navy News* employees or their families.

MYSTERY PICTURE 197

Name

Address

.....

.....

My answer

Pusser's backs campaign

FRESH from receiving his MBE at Buckingham Palace, Pusser's Rum President Charles Tobias headed to HMS Victory in Portsmouth, where members of the Senior Rates' Mess presented him with a box to keep his medal in.

The box was fashioned out of original timbers from the flagship of Admiral Nelson, who, as Mr Tobias remarked: "really set the standard for guts."

Mr Tobias obtained the original blend specification for the tot when the daily ration was discontinued in 1970, and now sells it for public consumption.

As our readers know, he is also the generous benefactor of a monthly bottle of rum for the best letter in *Navy News*.

Every year he presents a cut of his takings to the Tot Fund, which this year meant a cheque for £25,000 to the RNRMC.

Mr Tobias, who was invested in early June, said his day at the palace had been particularly exciting, not least because he met two Gurkhas and another soldier receiving bravery awards. "They were tough people – that's the sort of people you breed here," he said.

He added: "The most free people on earth have their roots in Great Britain, everywhere on earth where they speak English they have a great value system of freedom.

"I thank you people in the military for all you do in the service. If we didn't have the people we do we would be dead ducks and our whole value system would be destroyed."

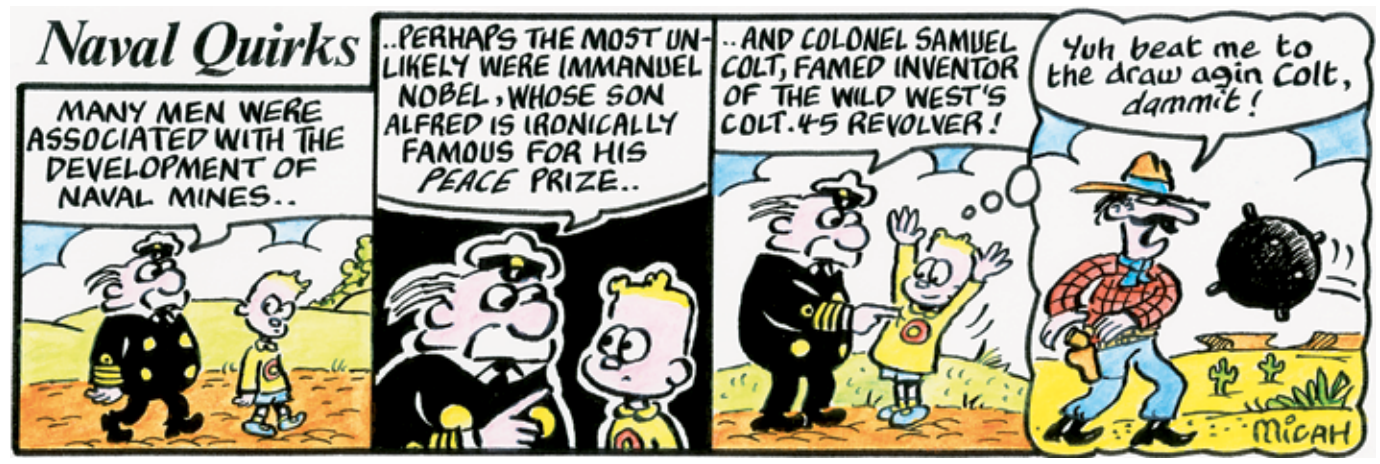
Mr Tobias also met up with Association General Secretary S/M Paul Quinn in Portsmouth to formally seal the financial backing by Pusser's for the RNA's new marketing campaign.

Advertising materials such as posters will, in future carry a strap proclaiming the link, allowing more of such materials to be supplied to branches – and there may be further benefits.

The Association has been investigating a members' discount on the purchase of their rum – see future RNA circulars for further details.



● *RNA General Secretary S/M Paul Quinn with Charles Tobias and a new RNA poster*



Now it's up to you...



● *RNA financial controller Michelle Bainbridge*

Hard work paves way to success

FRIDAY afternoon in Plymouth, and delegates to Conference flocked to hotels along the Hoe.

Ahead of them lay a welcome buffet and a gala dinner at HMS Drake, Conference, and the dedication of a new National Standard.

Then they all headed home, having had a convivial time and got through a bit of business. All very straightforward.

And why was it all very straightforward?

Much of that was down to a handful of individuals working furiously behind the scenes, who were thanked for their "quite remarkable achievements" by National Chairman S/M Chris Dovey.

Leading the team was General Secretary Paul Quinn, who took over from Paddy McClurg at the end of the 2010 Conference in Normandy and immediately set to work on Plymouth 2011.

Also in the thick of the fray were Nigel Huxtable, Michelle Bainbridge and Phil Shuttleworth, the HQ team.

All have been stepping up the pace in the weeks before Conference, not just ensuring the logistics were coming together but also collating material for the launch of the Member Get Member campaign, which involved the sorting and transport of hundreds of boxes and posters.

Michelle had to change the financial arrangements for this year's Conference, with pre-payment being the key, while she also had to set up a new monthly management accounts system for the RNA, all in addition to her normal duties – a performance which won praise from senior Association officers during the Conference.

The team moved to Plymouth on the Thursday of Conference week, starting each day with a 7.30 meeting to fine-tune the plans and iron out any wrinkles.

This dovetailed into the Herculean efforts of Arthur and Sue Gutteridge, of the host branch, who led the local taskforce in ensuring all was ready for delegates.

Nigel and Phil set up a temporary office at the hotel, which moved to the Guildhall during Conference, allowing last-gasp copying or printing, as well as moving and distributing the boxes of marketing material.

Michelle, supported by husband Bob, a recently-retired RN warrant officer, proved herself an admirable *concierge* as well, arranging for taxis to transport National Council members (and others) between central Plymouth and Camel's Head Gate at Devonport, from where coaches shuttled them to and from the WOs and SRs Mess.

Foul weather caused the cancellation of the parade on the Hoe, and entailed rewriting the script for the church service and subsequent ceremonials.

Again, aided by personal radios, the day went smoothly, and sound man (and organist for the service) Lyndon Ford was spared the dash between St Andrew's Church and the Hoe to transfer speakers and microphones.

To be honest, Paul Quinn and his team were not 100 per cent focused on Plymouth in recent weeks.

Because plans for Tyneside 2012 were already being worked on long before the team arrived in Devon...

MEMBERS of the RNA have been urged to guarantee the future of their organisation by taking part in a 'campaign that Saatchi and Saatchi would be proud of.'

Delegates were briefed on the new marketing initiatives which are designed to update the Association's image and bring in new members.

National Chairman S/M Chris Dovey had set the scene in his report on National Council activities, pointing out that the steady decline in membership in recent years meant that if nothing was done to arrest the trend, "we would be looking at the ultimate demise of the RNA in about ten years time."

S/M Dovey said it was decided to address not just recruitment, but the whole image of the RNA, and although there had been some criticism over the money spent, he believed a professional marketing approach (carried out by Mindworks) was correct.

An unexpected donation had virtually covered anticipated costs, and the decision was to some extent validated shortly afterwards when the Royal British Legion also decided to tackle the 'old pals' image.

Project executive Emma Harbison, of Mindworks, told the Conference that the main objective in terms of brand and corporate materials was to "develop and implement a strong and consistent brand identity that gives you a true reflection of you as a large, proactive and vibrant organisation and also reflects your ever-increasing relationship and relevance to today's Royal Navy."

With Conference Saturday marking the official launch of the new image, items such as headed notepaper, logos, and the brand guidelines could be obtained from HQ or will be available shortly through the revamped RNA website – and Emma paid tribute to the work of webmaster S/M Chris Hore in getting the new website up and running.

"You now have a crisp, clean and consistent corporate look," concluded Emma.

Mindworks managing director John Harris-Burland outlined the first two major recruitment campaigns which were launched on the back of the rebranding.

The first, Member Get Member, builds on the strong sense of belonging and the strength of the RNA's social aspects.

Reminding delegates that word of mouth is one of the best ways of attracting business, Mr Harris-Burland said the campaign is based on the notion that current members are the best people to attract new blood – and they now have the tools to do the job. Membership packs had been prepared by HQ staff before Conference, with delegates being invited to pick up their branch pack (and those of unrepresented neighbouring branches) after the close of business.



In the packs are posters, leaflets, stickers and referral card which are to be used in their members' own patches.

Mr Harris-Burland said advertisers would love to have the coverage provided by the RNA's network of branches.

"If every one of those branches put up half a dozen posters each you would have an advertising campaign that Saatchi and Saatchi would be proud of – so we are asking you to go and do that, because you can do it very cost effectively," he said.

He wanted to see posters up in local libraries, sailing clubs, golf clubs and the like.

"It is in your hands – we can make this one of the best campaigns ever for a membership organisation.

"I would like to think that in a few weeks time there will be 20,000 posters out across the UK.

"All you've got to do is put up one each – just one each."

Leaflets in the packs explain what the RNA is all about, and give details of where and when the local branch meets.

Mr Harris-Burland said there was one pull-up banner for each area, bearing the 'Once Navy, Always Navy' slogan, which stood up well during the market research process and still serves the RNA very well.

"The Member Get Member campaign is based on the principle that we can give you the materials to help promote the RNA, but really it is down to referrals – it is down to you, to actually ask somebody if they would like to join," he said.

"If every one of us got one new member, we would double the size of the organisation.

"So I am challenging all of you to go back to your areas and branches, and tell everybody that our objective over the next 12 months is to introduce one person each – just one person each"

Handing over application forms for himself and Emma to General Secretary S/M Paul Quinn, John Harris-Burland said: "I would be very proud to be a member of this organisation."

National President S/M John McAnally agreed that "personal invitation is by far the best way to get new members, not adverts," adding that the General Secretary had promised a bottle of Pusser's rum every three months until next year's Conference for the branch with the highest percentage of new members.

The second campaign is the Shipmates campaign, on the back of redundancies arising from defence review.

Mr Harris-Burland said the initiative was possibly even more exciting as it is a chance for the RNA to do some real good with today's serving Royal Navy.

With the first people leaving the Navy in September, it is "the RNA's opportunity to do something really helpful."

Under Shipmates, every single person leaving the Naval Service through the redundancy programme will have one year's free membership of the RNA funded through a charity contribution by the Maritime Charities Funding Group.

The RNA will have access to their details, and details of the RNA will go in every resettlement pack.

But the crucial element will be a personalised invitation to each individual, encouraging them to come along to a local branch of their choice for a meeting.

They would come along and meet RNA members already in civilian life, working and living in that area.

"Who better to help someone back into civilian life than someone who has already done it such as yourselves?" said Mr Harris-Burland.

"It is a very simple idea, but it seems to have captured the imagination of the Navy. It is our job now to make it work."

He said members should make them feel at home – offer them a good evening, and if they wanted it, advice on local services, or employment opportunities and the like.

Chief of the Defence Staff Gen Sir David Richards has already offered his support and congratulations for the campaign, adding that "efforts like yours demonstrate that all too often the issue is not cost, but rather the imagination and determination to make a personal effort.

RN's track record 'second to none'

A SERVICE feeling the pain of defence cuts but performing to the highest standards and traditions was the theme of guest speaker Rear Admiral David Steel's speech.

Dealing with the "rebalancing" of defence, Naval Secretary Rear Admiral Steel said: "I will not hide from the fact that the SDSR set the Navy some challenging, and very painful, targets."

He said the subject had been widely reported, but that he wanted to focus on the effect of the review on personnel.

"By April 2015, we will have committed to a drawdown of just 30,000 people," he said, noting that with the RNA boasting more than 22,000 shipmates, "it appears as though your membership will soon outstrip ours."

He continued: "By contrast, when I joined the Navy in 1979, it was just over 70,000 strong with 53 frigates, 13 destroyers and 13 submarines.

"By 2015, in addition to some very useful capital ships, we will have but 13 frigates, six destroyers and 12 submarines, with over 60 per cent of our sailors serving in front-line ships, submarines and air squadrons.

"These, of course, are highly-capable units – it's that we just don't have enough to go around."

Redundancies meant that the "inspired" Shipmates campaign *(see above)* would give the RNA "a busy time over the coming months and years," although he said the recruiting tap would not be turned off completely to avoid the manpower 'black hole' of the mid-1990s onwards.

He also noted that fewer than 800 had applied for the first tranche of 1,600 redundancies (and only 30 per cent of the junior ratings required), which he believed reflected "the commitment, loyalty and enjoyment our people have in our Service."

Rear Admiral Steel said the UK's prosperity and security still depended crucially on our ability to access the sea.

"Today, everywhere from Afghanistan to the South Atlantic, home waters to the Sea of China, the Royal Navy is alone in contributing to every one of the tasks demanded of Defence in the course of over 200-plus operations that conduct every year.

"We are the smallest of the three Services, yet we are doing everything from fighting the Taleban to delivering the nuclear deterrent, and absolutely plenty in between. And I would point out that we continue to do all the tasks today that we were doing 20 years ago and, in addition, contributing to two wars.

"Neither of the other two Services can boast such a track record of consistent and dedicated success."

Operation Herrick in Afghanistan is headed by two Naval Service 1* officers, and 3 Cdo Brigade is on its third tour, with the Royal Marines, on a *pro rata* basis, sustaining two-and-a-half times as many battlefield fatalities and injuries in Helmand province as any other organisation in Defence.

Rear Admiral Steel observed that "Afghanistan is not the only game in town," and outlined the Naval contribution to current operations off North Africa, including HM ships Liverpool Brocklesby, Triumph and Ocean, and listed a number of other ongoing tasks which the Navy performs, including fishery protection work in home waters and search and rescue operations out to sea and over the Scottish mountains.

The Admiral continued: "Our 'teeth to tail' ratio is tauter than it has ever been."

He concluded: "At a time when your Navy has never been so busy or more committed to operations, it seems ridiculous to be seeking your support in the way that I am today.

"The reality of our current situation, having to make so many people redundant at a time when they are so committed to the interests of our nation, is almost comical if it wasn't quite so serious.

"I pray for your help in ensuring that those that serve our nation at sea today, and ashore as the Royal Marines are, and those who are shortly to leave the Service, will remain part of the wider naval family as members of your fantastic organisation.

"I am confident that, through your endeavours and especially because of your wonderful Shipmates campaign that launches today, the Royal Naval Association will rise to the challenge and the Navy will remain indebted to you, as it always has been, for your continued and unstinting support."



● *The 'Top Table' and guests prepare for the opening of the 2011 Conference*

National Standard is dedicated – and dry

THE new RNA National Standard was dedicated on the Sunday of Conference weekend – but its first formal outing was postponed.

With heavy rain and strong winds buffeting the Hoe, organisers decided that the planned parade up to the Naval Memorial could not go ahead.

The ceremonies were instead carried out during the service at the Minster Church of St Andrew.

Almost 40 standards were paraded inside the church which, as Chaplain of the Fleet Revd Scott Brown pointed out, had seen Naval heroes including Raleigh to Drake pass through – William Bligh, of Bounty fame, had been christened in the church, which was rebuilt in the 1950s after it was badly damaged in the Blitz.

A guard of trainees from HMS Raleigh, plus Sea Cadets from Plymouth Drake and Plymouth Manadon units, brought a uniformed presence to the service, which saw the old National Standard marched in and placed on the altar, while the new furled standard was marched in and dedicated.

There was also the opportunity for the outgoing National Ceremonial Officer, S/M Alan Robinson, to hand over his pace stick to his successor, S/M Mick Kierans.

Wreaths were laid at the end of the ceremony, after which S/M John McAnally made his traditional address to the masses.

"What a wonderful Conference we have had!" he said. "Plymouth branch, you have played an absolute blinder!"

Delegates and other members then made their way to the Guildhall for a farewell gathering, while members of the guard and Sea Cadets were supplied with 150 fresh, hot pasties – another illustration of the level of detail which goes into the planning of such an event.



● *Association standards enter the Minster Church of St Andrew in Plymouth* Picture: Nigel Huxtable

Progress on future venues

DELEGATES were told of the progress of the Conference Study Group which was set up in the wake of decisions taken last year in Ouistreham.

National Chairman S/M Chris Dovey said that the group has produced a "very substantial report," and he congratulated them on what they had achieved.

"Much of the report contains very interesting and valid ideas, which I am sure Conference would wish to take forward – but National Council has some concerns with certain issues, which it would like to examine in further details."

With **Tyne** hosting the 2012 Conference, and **Crosby** bidding to host 2013 at a single venue – one of the well-supported proposals of the study group – Council felt that there was time to examine the proposals in more detail before producing recommendations for Conference next year – although there was some criticism that it would be 2014 before any proposals could be put into practice.

Green light for RN delegates

DEPUTY National President S/M Adrian Nance introduced a proposed amendment to RNA rules in the form of a National Council motion, putting into effect a decision at last year's conference to allow, under the Memorandum of Understanding with the Royal Navy, RN ships and establishments to provide delegates at National Conference.

The motion was seconded by Plymouth, which proposed the original motion last year.

Trevor Crowter (**Sherborne**) asked whether any establishment with RN personnel, such as RAF bases and MOD Abbey Wood, was entitled to have an RNA liaison officer, to which the Chairman of the Standing Orders Committee, S/M Jeremy Owens, replied that all RN personnel are on the books of a Navy establishment, which meant they were covered through their 'home' establishment.

The motion was carried.

Balance of power goes east

THE balance of power in recruiting shifted east this year with Number 3 Area claiming the three main UK titles.

After Number 4 Area's success last year, the Sword of Honour for the area gaining the greatest increase in full membership in 2010 went to **Number 3 Area**.

And Plymouth relinquished their hold on the Brigg's Dirk for branches of over 30 full members, with **Gosport** taking the honours in 2010.

The Brigg's Rose Bowl for branches of fewer than 30 members was claimed by **Bognor**.

The serious recruiters overseas were **Aquitaine** (branches over 30 full members) and **Natal** (branches under 30).

Meanwhile the President's Award for the area with most Gift Aid returns – the Tasker Bowl – was shared by **Number 3** and **Number 8** Areas.

And talking of the President, S/M John McAnally was presented with Life Membership of the Association in recognition of his "tremendous" service for the past ten years.

He said he was overcome with gratitude and appreciation at receiving "the greatest honour that the RNA can bestow on anyone."

Shrewsbury branch were presented with a certificate marking their Diamond jubilee.

Nurses are on call

THE Royal Navy once again provided medical cover for the Conference weekend in the form of two locally-based Naval nurses.

PONN Darryl 'Daz' Newman and LNN Leanne Parry are both based at Derriford Hospital and volunteered for the job – in Leanne's case, it was a chance to see her uncle, S/M Graham Parry, who was attending Conference.

Daz joined the Service in 1994 as a submariner and qualified as a nurse in 2004 – closing the establishment twice in the process, once as a deep at HMS Dolphin, and once as a nurse at Fort Blockhouse.

He has seen service in Sierra Leone and Iraq amongst other places, and is likely to head to Afghanistan next year.

Leanne's only deployment was on a medical exercise within sight of Plymouth breakwater, but the nurse – who joined the Navy in 2006 – is also likely to deploy to Helmand next year.

Big numbers

NATIONAL Conference 2011 was officially opened by the Lord Mayor of Plymouth, Cllr Peter Brookshaw.

Some 118 delegates attended the main business of the Saturday, but evening gatherings at the WOs and SRs Mess at HMS Drake saw up to 350 people attending– and the level of hospitality was praised by senior Association officers, who thanked both the host branch, Plymouth, and the staff at the Mess.

Bouquets and brickbats, RNA style

DELIVERING his 23rd report as Honorary Treasurer, S/M Ray Barraclough said the year ending December 31 2010 saw a deficit of almost £22,500.

The main source of income remains subscription, which fell from £192,000 in 2009 to £177,000, which reflected the increasing profile of members, and the demise of 13 branches.

On the plus side, RNA investments with Blackrock grew almost 10 per cent.

S/M Barraclough also paid tribute to Kevin and Sonia from Brooms Professional Services Ltd for their unstinting support.

National Chairman S/M Chris Dovey joined the National President in congratulating Plymouth branch for the programme they had organised

Delegates were then informed that the RNA's new virtual branch was now operating, reflecting great credit to Welfare Adviser Rita Lock for her efforts.

S/M Fitzgerald (**Dartmouth**) pointed out that there are numerous ship organisations and asked whether the RNA could act as an umbrella organisation.

S/M Dovey said the RNA was looking into that, adding there will always be a strong loyalty to a ship or unit, while the RNA has a wider remit – though as membership of associations declines there may be more opportunities to combine without such associations losing their identities.

In branch motions, S/M Tug Wilson (**Chatham**) proposed that national advisers and officers, such as the treasurer and welfare adviser, be appointed for two year periods (an amendment put that period at five years) in order to "regenerate" the team periodically, but the original motion, and a number of amendments, were rejected.

After some verbal sparring between the floor and the Standing Orders Committee chairman, a motion was withdrawn by **Chatham** as it called for branches to be able to nominate candidates for national advisory posts – a situation which already exists.

Leyland branch proposed withdrawal from membership of the International Maritime Confederation as it has cost £18,000 since 2007 to be a member, and few shipmates had any idea what benefits the Association derived from it.

The National Council amended the motion to allow them to consider the case for withdrawal and present a full report next year – there were concerns, but when those concerns were expressed to the IMC a new strategy was suggested, and it was felt that it would be fair to allow the changes to take effect before a final decision was made.

It would also avoid the embarrassment of withdrawal during the UK's presidency.

The amended motion was carried.

A motion from **Llandudno** branch on the Memorandum of Understanding had been superseded by the marketing initiatives reported earlier, but was proceeded with to allow the subject to be aired, as it was felt the MOU had been poorly implemented and there had been insufficient reviews.

National Council agreed that the MOU should be reviewed and renegotiated, as it had not brought the number of members it was hoped, but the motion was not carried.

East Antrim's motion called on the National Council to fulfil its promise to find 'suitable' HQ premises which were easily accessible – the current location at Semaphore Tower is within the secure area.

Deputy National President S/M Adrian Nance said the National Council opposed the motion. The move from London was in part designed to build firm links to the Royal Navy, which he said was happening, and visits were possible with some forethought – to say nothing of the recent HQ open day.

The motion was lost by a large majority.



H4H commit to Rehab centre for Devonport

FORCES charity Help for Heroes has pledged up to £20m to provide a specialist rehabilitation centre for injured and wounded commandos and sailors in Plymouth.

The Naval Service Pathway Project will provide a gym, hydrotherapy pool, bespoke accommodation for up to 60 personnel and administration centre among other facilities.

The rehab centre, due to open in Devonport Naval base in July 2012, builds on the existing work of Hasler Company in the establishment; the unit was formed to help Royal Marines injured in the line of duty along the 'journey back to business'.

At present, the former ballroom at the Drake junior rates' mess has been turned into a temporary rehabilitation centre, with a recently-opened adapted accommodation block for a dozen personnel to plug the gap until the new complex is ready.

Help for Heroes was initially founded in 2007 with the aim of providing a £20m complex at Headley Court, the Forces' main rehab centre in Surrey.

It's far outgrown that original campaign and aims to raise £100m with 'personnel recovery centres' being provided at Colchester, Tidworth, Catterick and, now, Plymouth.

The charity's boss, Bryn Parry, headed to Devonport and HMS Bulwark to unveil plans for the new complex. He was joined on the amphibious assault ship by Second Sea Lord Vice Admiral Charles Montgomery – who recently opened the interim facilities at Drake – and Andrew Robathan, Minister for Defence Personnel, Welfare and Veterans, plus injured military personnel, local dignitaries and local fundraisers.

"The launch of the project is important to us because we support equally all three Services and we are thrilled that the rehabilitation plans are now coming to fruition," said Mr Parry.

Vice Admiral Montgomery added: "I wish to highlight our immense gratitude for the exceptional contribution being made by Help for Heroes. It has committed £20m to support expanded and improved facilities.

"The wonderful support and hugely generous contribution and commitment being made today by Help for Heroes will not only benefit our people in the RN and RM. It is already – and will continue to be – made available to support injured and ill members of the Army and RAF.

"In fact there are already two soldiers being supported here in Devonport. We will work together with our sister Services and local supporting organisations to help our Servicemen and women."

NAVAL FAMILIES FEDERATION

Your voice is important to the NFF

OVER the last few months the NFF team has been up and down the country talking to personnel and families about life with the Royal Navy and Royal Marines, *writes Emma Prince, Marketing & Communications Manager*.

We were invited up to visit HMNB Clyde in May, which was a fantastic opportunity to get a real feel for life north of the border.

We spoke to families, the Chain of Command, and staff of the Naval Personal and Family Service and Royal Marines Welfare about the unique challenges in this area.

The Maritime Change Programme sees big changes for the community as Faslane becomes the Submarine Centre of Specialisation and the home of all Royal Navy submarines. Personnel and families will have to make their own decision about whether or not to move to Faslane over the coming years and there is a real sense of change in the brisk Scottish air.

Unfortunately whilst we were in Scotland there was also the threat of volcanic ash in the air; our flights home were cancelled and an impromptu road trip home was spent with some lovely folk from Flagship Training and the Royal Navy and Royal Marines Charity!

We have a busy summer ahead; July sees us attending families' days in Lympstone, Culdrose, Portsmouth and Poole. We will also be at HMS Raleigh's Open Day and briefing at three DO Courses – not bad for a team of six!

If you are attending any of these events come over to our stall to say hello. You can register any issues or concerns and sign up for our Homeport magazine and e-update.

Following the NFF item in the June edition of *Navy News* we received this email from a serving Senior Rate:

"I was pleased to see the article in Navy News with regards to the Armed Forces Covenant.

"Brilliantly, Kim Richardson summed it up for me in the first sentence: 'To some of our families it will mean something, to others it is meaningless.'

Until I actually witness a positive action as the direct result of a 'Binding' Covenant actively supported by the Government (including all elements of local Government), then sadly it's just another empty wish list under the guise of a promising policy!

"Until the Government are done with the rest of the Defence-Cuts, as servicemen and women, the best we can ever expect is the least-worst, so in a nutshell until we see the goods, it's meaningless to me and my family (I'm not holding my breath)."

The Senior Rate is married with three children. He goes on to say:

"We have recently bought our own house, because after 14 years service we have had approx nine married quarters from Culdrose to Faslane.

"Each time we moved, in my mind's eye we were at an immediate disadvantage with regards to the choice of schools, places, transport, admission boards etc and that was before taking into consideration the impact on my wife's job and education prospects, NHS dentists, local and employers' attitudes to service families etc.

"My wife and I have used the CEAS (to their credit) on a number of occasions to try to get a common sense result from school admission appeal boards with some success and some failures.

"My 14 years of service have been interesting but it is slowly becoming a 'singles' game.

"I did use the LSAP scheme to buy my house, but due to the minimal amount (£8,500) we had to haggle with the banks to get what we needed.

"When I deploy my wife is a single parent without an immediate local family support network, and there is only so much the HIVE and volunteers can do.

"On the plus side, I am now ready if the cut-backs affect my current employment and I'm going to use my enhanced learning credits as soon as I can before those are reduced or removed. Thankfully the RN trained me in Damage Control which is what my Family and I are having to carry out.

"I will probably not see any improvements from this Government in my last few years serving with the RN but I intend to push for any improvements for younger and more susceptible families."

We felt this email captured very well the feelings of some of our serving personnel and their families.

Can we reassure this PO and others in the same or a similar position that we will continue to push for improvements and hold the Government to account too.

■ *The Future of Accommodation for Service Families*

As part of a wider study, the MOD is looking into the future of accommodation for Service personnel and families. The NFF is the representative body for Naval Service families and we will be actively involved to make sure that the opinions of families are considered.

What housing options would you like the MOD to consider in the future?

We are running a short survey on our website: www.nff.org.uk – please take five minutes to complete it. This is your chance to make your views count. Survey completion date: July 31 2011.

Here is a roundup of recent news concerning the Service community:

■ *Armed Forces Top of the List for Housing*

The Housing Minister, Grant Shapps, has announced that from now on members of the Armed Forces will be given top priority for housing help.

Serving personnel, as well as those recently retired, will be able to benefit from the FirstBuy Scheme, which provides £400m to help 10,000 families across the country get on the property ladder over the next two years.

The Minister also signalled that the Government will ensure that all low-cost home ownership schemes will now routinely place members of the Armed Forces at the top of their priority lists, and that government housing agents will be instructed to go out and actively recruit military personnel for such schemes.

The news comes in addition to work between the Government, credit agencies and the Royal Mail (who set postcodes on which many credit ratings are based) to ensure that those living on a base or serving abroad are not disadvantaged when applying for a mortgage.

Mr Shapps said: "I can confirm that military personnel are being promoted – instead of being just one of the priority groups for schemes like FirstBuy, they will now become the absolute top priority."

"But that's not the end of the story – until now we've had a mad situation where living on a base or serving abroad has disadvantaged people in the Armed Forces applying for a mortgage.

"So the Government will also be working with credit reference agencies and Royal Mail to ensure that this is no longer the case."

This work forms part of the Armed Forces Covenant commitment to improve access to housing for personnel, veterans and their families and comes as a result of a meeting with the Housing Minister which the NFF attended.

■ *Changes to Royal Navy website and RNCom*

The new Royal Navy Internet website should be live any time now. It incorporates an updated version of the Royal Navy site, Recruiting, RNCom (Royal Navy Community website), all within the website address: www.royalnavy.mod.uk.

RNCom Members Area: This area houses the unit pages, chat room and forums. It will remain as is until later this year at www.rncom.mod.uk.

From then the existing forums will close down and new forums will be available in the Community area of: www.royalnavy.mod.uk.

Unfortunately it will not be possible to transfer existing membership details across to the new site.

Details on how to re-register will be published well in advance of the closure of the current forums.

If you are using an RNCom.mod.uk e-mail account you will need to set up an alternative as these accounts will no longer be available.

■ *The Future of the Continuity of Education Allowance (CEA)*

With an announcement imminent as we go to print – check our website: www.nff.org.uk for updates on this allowance.

■ *Armed Forces Bereavement Scholarship Scheme*

Launched in April 2011, the aim of the Armed Forces Bereavement Scholarship Scheme is to give the children of those who have died in the Service of their country a head start in life by enabling them to obtain a university degree or further education training.

Government funded, the scheme is open to any child whose parent died while serving in the Armed Forces after January 1 1990, and the parent's death was deemed to be attributable to their Service.

The scheme will provide a further scholarship to enable an eligible bereaved child to stay in further education in order to obtain the necessary qualifications to secure a place at university.

It will then provide a contribution towards the cost of a first undergraduate course at a publicly-funded UK higher education institution. The university scholarship contributes toward both the tuition fees and maintenance costs.

The scheme has been backdated so that applicants can apply for funding for study from 1 September 2010 and applications may be made for scholarships for further education or university courses attended from this date.

The award of a scholarship will not depend on the financial situation of the applicant or their family and should not preclude a recipient from applying for other financial support.



Eligible children from overseas will be treated as resident in England for the purposes of these scholarships and payments will not be liable for Income Tax.

Full details of the scheme are available from: www.mod.uk, enter Education Scholarship Scheme for Bereaved Service Children in the search box.

■ *New Schools Admissions code*

A consultation has been launched to make the school admissions process in England simpler, fairer and more transparent for parents.

The current Admissions Code and Appeals Code mean a complex and unfair process. The proposed changes would see two new, simpler codes created and will increase the number of good school places available by making it easier for popular schools to take more pupils.

Amongst other benefits, those that would particularly benefit children from Service families include; improving the in-year applications scheme (moving to a new area during the academic year) so fewer children face delays finding a new school, and allowing Service children to be admitted to infant classes even if it takes the class over the 30-pupil limit.

The consultation also asks whether Academies and Free Schools should be able to prioritise children receiving the pupil premium (like Service children), as announced in the Schools White Paper last year.

The new codes will take effect for the September 2013 intake. For more information visit the Department for Education website: www.education.gov.uk.

■ *Social Networking: Online Security*

The MOD have launched a campaign to ensure serving personnel, their families and veterans use social media sites in a safe manner, which does not endanger personal or operation security. Visit: www.blogs.mod.uk/onlinesecurity for guidance on responsible use of such sites.

■ *Contact the NFF*

If you have any comments on the issues discussed in this article, or would like to raise a matter of concern, please e-mail the NFF on: admin@nff.org.uk or telephone: 023 9265 4374. Postal correspondence can be sent to: NFF, Castaway House, 311 Twyford Avenue, Portsmouth, PO2 8RN.

where to look

GALAXY MESSAGES

Galaxy 17-2011 Appointment of his Royal Highness the Prince Philip as Lord High Admiral of the United Kingdom.

DIBs

44/11: MOD sets out plans for successor nuclear deterrent submarines: Defence Secretary Dr Liam Fox on May 18 2011, announced the approval of the Initial Gate Business Case for the successor submarine design that will deliver our nuclear deterrent well into the 2060s.

52/11: Launch of the Armed Forces Community Covenant scheme: The Community Covenant complements the Armed Forces Covenant and is a statement of mutual support between a civilian community and its local military community.

DINs

DIN 2011 DIN01-134: Online Security Awareness Campaign

DIN 2011 DIN01-132: Armed Forces Bereavement Scholarship Scheme

DIN 2011 DIN07-108: Establishment of P Squadron – Opportunities available to personnel

RNTMs

Issue 08/11 RNTM 152/11: Core Working Week (CWW) and Recording of Leave – Clarification of Policy

Issue 08/11 RNTM 159/11: Desmond Wettern Fleet Award 2011

Issue 09/11 RNTM 162/11: The introduction of General Service Respirator (GSR) to the Naval Service

Careless online talk costs lives

A REMINDER has gone out to Service personnel and their families to take care when chatting online – whether forums, blogs, Facebook, Twitter or any other realm of online discussion.

An update on Facebook can risk lives out in theatre and expose someone to danger at home, as is graphically shown in the YouTube videos available on the MOD website and the current *Two-Six* DVD (*see still right*).

It is important that you are aware of how much information is available online about you – not just posted by you, but by your family, your friends, your colleagues and even just the bloke you met in the pub...

You should also look at the settings on every social networking site you use, and ensure that you're happy with how your information is being used and shared.

■ ***Full details can be found in DIN 01-134 on the RN intranet.***



Get the forms right before leaving

A GREAT number of individuals gearing themselves up to leaving the Services do so having been unable to attend the Financial Aspects of Resettlement briefing that informs them of the administrative procedures they should follow to ensure that their terminal benefits are paid accurately and on time.

Lt Cdr David Marsh, from the Forces Pension Society, explains the process and one or two issues you should make yourself aware of to help avoid any unnecessary angst at such a key time in one's life.

The most common question asked by the 'retiree' is "How do I apply for my pension and lump sum?" There is a form (there is always a form!) that needs completing; it is called a 'PENS FORM 1' and can be submitted via your JPAC account at any time within your last nine months of service.

Furthermore, a paper version of the form will be enclosed with your Service Leaver's Pack, which should be received between three to four months before your exit date.

I know for a fact that some will complete both versions 'just in case...' – if you are inclined to follow this trend, be careful.

You must make sure that both forms are completed identically, because if they are not, then the Service Personnel & Veteran's Agency (SPVA tel 0800 085 3600) in Glasgow will process the most recent of the two they receive.

This lack of attention to detail cost one Warrant Officer his ability to commute part of his pension and a loss of an additional £20,000 extra tax free money on leaving; all because he failed to complete that section of the form on the second of the two application forms!

SPVA will process your application form once your final date in the Service has been reached.

When your pension and lump sum, or Early Departure Payments (EDP) have been calculated, SPVA will write to you to let you know exactly what it is you are to receive; at the same time they will also issue a warrant authorising Xafinity Paymaster to put your pension/EDP income stream into payment.

SPVA, therefore, authorise all terminal benefits and will also pay you any lump sums due, but they do not pay your regular income – Xafinity Paymaster (who reside in Russell Way in Crawley tel: 0845 1212 514) do that, and it is with Xafinity Paymaster that you will probably have most dealings about pension issues once you have left the Armed Forces.

As I have said, SPVA do pay your lump sums and they have a remit to ensure that they are paid into your bank account within 30 calendar days following your last day in the Services; in most cases they are being paid between seven and 15 days after your last day of pay.

A note of caution here – the bank account details you put on your PENS FORM 1 merely instruct Xafinity Paymaster where you want your regular income to be paid, they do not instruct SPVA where any lump sums are to be paid, SPVA will pay such sums into the bank account(s) where your last salary was paid.

If the two accounts are the same then there is nothing to worry about; however, if they are not, then you must ensure that your JPAC account reflects the bank account you want your lump sums to be paid into, before your final paid day in the Armed Forces.

If you are unfortunate enough not to have your lump sums paid to you within 30 days of your exit date, and it is not your fault for the delay, you can apply for a refund of any bank charges that you may have incurred because of that delay.

If you have not incurred any bank charges the Treasury will not pay a refund of any lost interest until the payment is more than 12 months late.

Individuals leaving under AFPS75 scheme rules who are commuting part of their pension should be aware that SPVA tend to pay your terminal grant and the commutation figure into your bank account as a single lump sum – make sure you know the individual awards so you can satisfy yourself that the one lump sum is what you were expecting, since the odd error does occur.

Once Xafinity Paymaster receives the warrant from SPVA authorising them to put your regular income into payment, they too will write to you to inform you of what you will receive, but more importantly they will tell you what income tax is being removed and what day of the month you will receive your payments.

You have no choice of the day of the month your income is paid, and it can literally be any day; however, once you have been allocated a day, it will be that day for the rest of your life – except bank holidays and weekends, when payment is made the nearest working day prior to your allocated day.

Increases are applied to pensions and EDP income streams every year on the first Monday of the new tax year. The percentage used is that of the previous September's CPI rate.

If you are under age 55 (other than those invalided out) your increases are stored until you reach that age then your pension or EDP income stream is increased to take account of those stored increases – it happens automatically. From age 55 your income is then increased each year until you decide to call it a day...

The Forces Pension Society fights for members of the Armed Forces and their dependants to receive the pension to which they are entitled and which they deserve.

For more information please call +44 (0) 20 7820 9988 or visit the website www.ForcesPensionSociety.org.

Changes in Cyprus

THE role of the British military in Cyprus is under review – Cyprus remains a significant commitment for British Armed Forces who contribute to the UN mission on the island, protect national assets, maintain support for operations in Afghanistan and a forward operating base for other contingencies.

However there is recognition by the MOD that there is a need for an all-encompassing study of the defence role in Cyprus, looking at the wider developments in defence, including the end of combat operations in Afghanistan in 2015.

This review is due to report to the Defence Secretary at the end of the year.

It's your 2-6

NEED to get your message across to the rest of the RN?

The *Two-Six* TV DVD and *Navy News* pages are here to spread the word. Your thoughts and opinions are invaluable. *Two-Six* is an internal communications product produced by CTN and the latest copy is now out.

The DVD is sent to unit COs across Navy Command; this includes all ships and shore establishments in the UK. Each edition looks at various issues affecting the Naval Service and its personnel.

There are numerous ways to watch *Two-Six*. The first is via the copy sent to your unit; so speak to your DO/EWO/BWO for a copy. The others require access to the internet by going to the dedicated site of *Two-Six* at www.twosix.tv or via youtube by going to www.youtube.com/twosix.

RNCom has its own *Two-Six* area which gives you access to the latest and archived additions of Two-Six.

Please forward any constructive ideas about what should be covered to:

■ RN IC hub – 93832 8809, 93832 8821, FLEET-DCS-INFO-Media Mailbox

■ Pauline Aquilina, 9621 85984. Pauline Aquilina is also the first point of contact for the Royal Navy facebook site. Search for Royal Navy and follow the Service online.

Beeching prize for compassionate care

A NEW prize for compassionate care is being introduced, and honouring Albert Medal winner SBA George William Beeching.

The 23-year-old Sick Berth Attendant was serving on board HMS Ibis when his ship was attacked and sunk by torpedo-carrying aircraft on November 10 1942.

George Beeching was between decks when his ship was struck, causing serious damage and a list to starboard of some 15 degrees. The young man tended the men who came forward with injuries and wounds, including one man seriously burnt about the face and hands. Once the ship began to heel over, SBA Beeching helped the man to the deck, gave him a life belt and got him safely into the water before abandoning ship himself. He was not seen again.

His Albert Medal in Gold was stolen from a display at a museum in the early 1990s, and his family are keen for any information that might help them recover this invaluable decoration.

The George Beeching prize of £250 for an individual or £500 for a team will be awarded annually to the RN, RM or RFA healthcare worker or team who has displayed outstanding kindness, care or thoughtfulness to patients during the course of their normal duties.

Navy Command wants everyone to succeed

VICE Admiral Charles Montgomery has written a letter to all Service and civilian personnel in Navy Command to remind them of the importance of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (ED&I) as part of core business.

The letter, signed by the admiral alongside Liz Cassidy, the Command Secretary, urges staff to keep these issues at the front of their minds during development of policies, services and other work-related functions.

It states: "Equality is not about treating everybody the same; it is about fostering an environment where everybody has a chance to succeed."

The Equality Act 2010 introduced a new public sector equality duty (PSED) – the general duty came into effect on April 5 2011, and the specific duty will be introduced later this year.

The general duty requires authorities to pay due regard to the need to: eliminate discrimination, victimisation and harrassment; advance equality of opportunity; and foster good relations.

These requirements apply across the protected characteristics of age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex and sexual orientation.

There is more information about the Equality Act and the PSED on the Navy Command Equality and Diversity website.

You can also obtain advice from the NCHQ E&D Policy team:

Cdr Liz Walmsley
FLEET-DNPS PPOL EandD Emp SO1
NCHQ, MP3-1
Leach Building
Whale Island
Portsmouth
Hants PO2 8BY
Tel: 93 832 5706

Prince Philip is Lord High Admiral

PRINCE Philip has been appointed Lord High Admiral of the United Kingdom, on occasion of his 90th birthday.

The Queen appointed the Duke of Edinburgh on his 90th birthday into the post which she has held since 1964 when the office of First Lord of the Admiralty was abolished.

At that time the functions of the Commissioners were transferred to the Admiralty Board of a tri-Service Defence Council, and the title of Lord High Admiral, after a long period in abeyance, was invested in the Queen.

The transfer of the appointment is a significant occasion for the Royal Navy and a most fitting honour for the Duke in recognition of his long service and dedication to the Royal Navy and Royal Marines.

The Senior Service sends its heartfelt congratulations to Prince Philip on his assumption of the title.

Community covenant

THE first Community Covenant, a voluntary statement of mutual support between a civilian community and its local Armed Forces, has been launched in Oxfordshire, and will be launched in the Vale of Glamorgan, Hampshire and North Yorkshire as *Navy News* goes to press.

The Community Covenant is a key element of the Armed Forces Covenant which outlined the commitment among the Armed Forces, Government and nation.

The aim of the Community Covenant is: to encourage local communities to support the Armed Forces community; to promote understanding among the public of issues affecting Service personnel; to recognise the sacrifices made by members of the military; and to encourage activities to integrate both communities.

£30 million has been pledged over the next four years to support the Community Covenant.

■ ***Find out more in DIB 2011/52***

Boost your welfare with RNRMC

THE Royal Navy & Royal Marines Charity (RNRMC) is giving your ship, submarine, unit or establishment the chance to win one of eight £1,000 cash prizes towards your welfare fund, on top of the two grants it already receives each year.

All you have to do is sign up to the Payroll Giving Scheme. For £5 a month, that comes out of your salary before tax, you will receive automatic sports insurance, and help the RNRMC support you, your oppos and family through bereavement, injury and hard times. If you can manage a bigger donation, that's great.

Sign up now, through your Payroll Giving Scheme representative at your unit, or through the Royal Navy & Royal Marines Charity website by downloading a form, or by contacting Dean Rogers on 023 9254 8076 and you could win £1,000 for your welfare fund.

Go on, give it a go!

Forces advice

FORCESELECT is a specialist recruitment consultancy run by former service personnel for service leavers and endorsed by the MOD. It provides advice and guidance for those leaving the service to help them find the best and most suitable jobs within UK businesses.

To register your details, go to www.forceselect.com If you're leaving the service in the near future, a recruitment consultant will contact you within days.

NOTICEBOARD

Win Royal Marines in miniature

DO WE have a top competition for you this month?

Well, yes we do.

This is a replica Jackal vehicle or MWMIK (pronounced em-wimmick – Mobility Weapon-Mounted Installation Kit) as used by the Royal Marines right now in Afghanistan.

It features a 360˚ rotating .50 heavy machine-gun, a swivelling front mount, off-road tyres and a small equipment box, plus space for three figures (not included).

As well as the ten-inch action figures which have been on sale for the past couple of years, the firm has produced a series of two-inch building-brick characters – including a sailor, commando and helicopter pilot – with various sets to construct from a RIB and docks to an Army quad bike and desert scene and, for the RAF, a Merlin. More miniature sets are due to be unveiled in the autumn.

The company has also launched (boom boom) a Fleet Air Arm Joint Strike Fighter model. Fired from a special spring-powered 'gun', the foam models of the supersonic jet stays airborne for up to ten metres. You see, we knew catapults would make a naval comeback one day…

You can find the complete range of toys at the website www.character-online.com/products/HM-Armed-Forces/



To celebrate the release of this latest series of official HM Armed Forces toys and action figures, the nice folk at Character Options are offering some as prizes to *Navy News* readers.

We have one Jackal to give away as a top prize (it normally retails for £39.99), plus two talking Royal Marine dolls (£19.99), one commando sniper (£14.99) and Joint Strike Fighter/launcher (£9.99) for runners-up.

To win, tell us the name of the author of the bestselling novel *Day of the Jackal* (you might have to ask your dad… or granddad…).

Send your entry to toys@navynews.co.uk or Toy Competition, *Navy News*, Leviathan Block, HMS Nelson, Portsmouth, PO1 3HH.

Entries must be received by mid-day on Monday July 11 2011. The normal competition rules apply.

Trophy lives



AS THE tide of World War 2 turned slowly in favour of the Allies it was decided to attack the weaker of the Axis nations, Italy, by invading Sicily. Codenamed Operation Husky, the amphibious and airborne assault started with a landing on the night of July 9-10 1943; by the end of July 10 the virtually undamaged port of Syracuse, which was capable of handling 5,000 tons of stores per day, was in British hands.

Within six weeks of the initial attack the enemy forces had either escaped to the Italian mainland or been captured.

The catalogue of Allied resources used in this successful operation makes interesting reading – 115,000 British and 66,000 American troops were employed together with 279 warships, 2,074 landing craft and 237 merchant ships.

Command of the forces was split between the British and Americans with the land forces being under General Eisenhower and his deputy, the British General Alexander.

The overall maritime commander was the Royal Navy's Admiral Cunningham with the ships being divided into two forces – the British Mediterranean Fleet under Admiral Ramsay operating to the east and Admiral Hewitt's US 8th Fleet to the west.

As a precursor to Husky, in April 1943 a male corpse was placed in the sea off southern Spain by the submarine HMS Seraph.

The body had false papers identifying it as Major William Martin, Royal Marines, and a briefcase containing documents showing that the forthcoming invasion would be in Sardinia and Greece.

As expected, the supposedly-neutral Spanish passed the papers to the Germans, who responded by starting to move troops out of Sicily. The codename for this was Operation Mincemeat, and it came to be known as 'The Man Who Never Was'.

Within three weeks of the Sicily landings the Germans had lost three submarines and the Italians eight; the invading Allies had lost four merchant ships and two tank landing ships, with a further two merchantmen and two cruisers suffering damage, one being the Dido-Class anti-aircraft cruiser HMS Cleopatra.

She is shown in wartime camouflage in Trophy No **21,439** and was torpedoed on July 16 1943 by the Italian submarine Dandalo. (The greater threat to the Allied ships was actually posed by enemy air attacks which led to thirteen ships being sunk and several more sustaining damage.)

HMS Cleopatra had been in the Mediterranean from February 1942 and had seen a great deal of action.

Having sailed from Gibraltar on February 9 1942 she was bombed *en route* to Malta and had to make for Alexandria for repairs to be carried out.

She was Admiral Vian's flagship at the second Battle of Sirte on March 23, in June she covered Operations Harpoon and Vigorous (simultaneous running of convoys to Malta from both Gibraltar and Alexandria) and in August 1942, when the running of a fast convoy to Malta was under way (Operation Pedestal), Cleopatra conducted a diversionary bombardment of Rhodes.

Early 1943 saw her attacking Axis traffic en route to Tunisia before being involved in the Husky operation.

Following her torpedoing temporary repairs were conducted at Malta; she was then able to cross the Atlantic to Philadelphia where permanent repairs were carried out.

By the time these were complete the European war was drawing to a close and Cleopatra joined the 5th Cruiser Squadron of the British East Indies Fleet; following the Japanese withdrawal from Singapore she was to be the first warship to enter the recaptured port.

Farewell tribute to Sir Henry Leach

MORE than 80 of Britain's senior military figures past and present paid tribute to one of the Navy's greatest 20th Century leaders.

Admiral of the Fleet Sir Henry Leach served the Navy and nation for 45 years, from helping to sink the Scharnhorst as a gunnery officer aboard HMS Duke of York to convincing the government to retake the Falklands as First Sea Lord 40 years later.

Sir Henry died in April at the age of 87. Such is the esteem in which he is held that a service of remembrance and thanksgiving was organised in Winchester Cathedral, attended by more than 800 people, including a good 80 admirals, generals and senior airmen.

Every member of the Navy Board – the senior officers and civil servants who are responsible for the day-to-day affairs of the Royal Navy – led by First Sea Lord Admiral Sir Mark Stanhope, representing the Queen and Duke of Edinburgh, were present, as were Admiral the Lord Boyce on behalf of the Most Honourable Order of the Bath, Sukey Cameron, the Falkland Islands Government representative in London and Baroness Thatcher's private secretary, Mark Worthington.

"Sir Henry was a truly inspirational leader whose wartime experience, decisiveness and coolness under pressure played a pivotal role in ensuring the recovery of the Falkland Islands from Argentinean invasion in 1982," said Admiral Stanhope.

"An utterly selfless and highly moral man, Sir Henry has left an enduring mark on the Royal Navy as well as the many charities he became involved with after leaving active service.

Sir Henry joined the Navy as a cadet at the age of 13 in 1937 and left in the rank of Admiral of the Fleet in 1982. Having spent most of World War 2 at sea, he went on to command a destroyer, a squadron of frigates and a commando carrier before being promoted to Flag Rank and ultimately appointed First Sea Lord and Chief of Naval Staff in 1979.

A Royal Navy colour party and Royal Marines buglers from HMS Collingwood took part in the service.

Deaths

Lt Oliver Richard Augustin RM. 42 Commando J Company. Died from an IED explosion whilst on patrol in Helmand Province, Afghanistan. May 27. Aged 23.

Marine Samuel Giles William Alexander RM MC. 42 Commando J Company. Had been awarded the Military Cross in 2009 for his bravery in a previous tour of Afghanistan when he deliberately went out alone to protect his fallen Section Commander, by engaging the enemy armed only with his 9mm pistol, his machine gun having run out of ammunition, forcing the enemy to retreat; his brave action undoubtedly saved the lives of his comrades. Died from an IED explosion whilst on patrol in Helmand Province, Afghanistan. May 27. Aged 28.

Lance Corporal Martin Joseph 'Fish' Gill RM. 42 Commando Kilo Company. Joined the Royal Marines 2008. Upon completion of training appointed to the Fleet Protection Group RM and within a year was promoted to Lance Corporal taking responsibility of a four man team guarding the UK's nuclear deterrent. He subsequently moved to Kilo Company, 42 Commando 2010 where he assumed the role of Section Second in Command. Fatally wounded by small arms fire in Helmand Province, Afghanistan. June 5. Aged 22.

See page 4 for further information.

Rear Admiral John Templeton-Cotill. Called to the Navy in 1940 he was appointed to Crocus on Atlantic convoy duty but due to his adept skills at French, he was sent as liaison officer to the Free French sloop Chevreuil and dispatched to the Free French colonies in the Pacific arriving in Tahiti just before the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. Transferring as a trooper to the 112th US Cavalry, he spent six months on horseback patrolling the northern islands against Japanese submarine landings. After an honourable discharge from the regiment he returned to the UK and appointed flag lieutenant to Flag Officer Malta. In 1944 as second-in-command of MTB 421 based at Livorno he took part in several night actions against German coastal convoys; then aide-de-camp to the Governor-General of Australia 1945-46. He served in warship London, which was badly damaged during the Yangste Incident followed by several seagoing appointments in destroyers and a brief attachment to MI6 before being appointed to command a minesweeping squadron in the Mediterranean; later involved in the Eoka insurgency in Cyprus. Second-in-command of Tiger 1959-61 then Naval Attache in Moscow for two years. In command of the 23rd Escort Squadron from the frigate Rhyl with deployments to Singapore and the Beira patrol then spent 18 months with the Directorate of Operational analysis at Weybridge. Given command of Bulwark in 1968, he was promoted rear-admiral 1970 and was chief of staff in Singapore in the last year of the British base before being appointed Flag Officer Malta. Appointed CB on retiring. May 23. Aged 90.

Cdr Peter Savage, Pilot. Entered Dartmouth 1926 where he won the King's Dirk. After service in Barham, Warspite, Danae, Dauntless and Cairo he volunteered for flying. Pre-war he flew with 822 and 801 Naval Air Squadrons and in 1938 piloted the Walrus Amphibian, launched by catapult from cruisers. In 1940 he was leading Blackburn Skua dive-bombers of 801 NAS from Furious in a raid on shipping at Tromsø, northern Norway, when his aircraft was hit by flak; unable to find the carrier in poor weather and running very low on fuel, he nursed his aircraft over mountains into neutral Sweden, ditched in a lake, threw documents and a secret bomb-aiming sight into the water before climbing into a dinghy with his navigator; met on shore by a Swedish army patrol they were interned in Stockholm. After a prisoner exchange he rejoined Furious in June 1941 and was awarded a DSC. Given command of 809 NAS flying winter operations in the Arctic in the Fairey Fulmar fighter from the carrier Victorious and in the summer of 1942 as part of the escort to relieve Malta (Operation Pedestal) he was awarded a DSO. He went on to found the School of Naval Air Warfare and in 1944 was chosen to join Admiral Sir Philip Vian's staff in the British Pacific Fleet, where he had charge of air intelligence, planned offensive air operations against the Japanese and continued to revise tactics; at the end of the war he was mentioned in despatches. 1954 he became British Assistant Naval Adviser in Ottawa. March 21. Aged 98.

Lt Cdr Monty Davenport. About to start research in pharmacology when he was called up into the RNVR and on the strength of his scientific training was appointed to reinforce the Naval Intelligence department scrutinising British wireless traffic for mistakes in ciphering and coding. In 1940 he took responsibility for encrypting messages into a code that the Italians could read; the intention was to sap Italian morale by portraying them as a liability to their German allies. He was then lent to secure communications networks for defence of the Shetland Islands against a possible German invasion. During 1941-42 he instigated a signals deception plan to protect convoys in the Mediterranean which contributed to the successful planning and execution of Operation Torch, the Allied landings in North Africa; he subsequently served in the headquarters established in Algiers. Promoted lieutenant commander at the age of 26 he was behind further deception schemes of faked wireless traffic and agent reports. After the war he continued his career in intelligence as one of the British experts sent to Flensburg, Germany, to interrogate their German counterparts who had been responsible for decoding British signals and on demobilisation he joined GCHQ where he assumed responsibility for the security of British government communications. Appointed OBE in 1959 and CBE in 1972. April 14. Aged 94.

Jack French DSM. CPO Telegraphist. Served 1944-70. Telegraphist hero of Amethyst in the Yangtze Incident where contrary to popular belief there was no two-hour radio silence as Jack beamed an 'okay' and position every 15 minutes to the Admiralty; also served in Afrikander C-in-C South Atlantic. Upon retirement worked at GCHQ Cheltenham. May 3.

Roger Steedon. POMEM. Served 1962-84 in Devonshire (62-64), Hydra, Hecate, Ulster (68-70), Ark Royal (72-74), Hermes (75-78) and Hecla (80-83). Recent ex-member Plymouth RNA. March 23. Aged 66.

Winifred Bibb (née Bradley). Signal Wren in Forth in Scottish water 1944-45, WRANS Association Perth Australia, May 12. Aged 89.

Raymond John Dodd. HO rating. Served WW2 in Fal and Inman. Secretary/Treasurer River Class Frigate Association.

Peter Moss Baker. A/PO Radio Mechanic aboard Peacock 1946-47. HMS Peacock Association. April 22.

Keith 'Taff' Weetman. POMEM. Served 1964-78 in Lynx, Triumph, Achilles, Bulwark, Naiad, Hecla and Goldcrest. HMS Bulwark Association. May 15. Aged 65.

Donald James 'Don' Lord. CPO Air (AH1). Served 1950-72 in Ocean, Bulwark, Victorious and Illustrious, also RNAS Siskin, Daedalus, Gamecock, Peregrine, Ariel, Goldcrest and Yeovilton (892 NAS). Upon leaving the service he became a doorman at the House of Commons and after promotion rose to the position of Speaker's secretary and train bearer. The Aircraft Handlers Association. April 13. Aged 78.

Ernest Truman 'Butch' Limb. Leading Torpedo Operator. Served 1941-46 on Arctic convoys in Oribi and Far East action in Tradewind. April 28. Aged 91.

John 'Sin-Bad' Sychelles. AB. Served 1958-65 in Keppel and Ark Royal with five years in Reserve. May 16. Aged 73.

Gordon Robert 'Andy' Anderson. CPO. Served 1943-66. Enlisted at Royal Arthur as a mechanic he later trained as a telegraphist/coder and served in Cabbala, Mercury, Copra, Nile, Victory, Pembroke, Loch Glendhu, Warrior, Osprey, Maidstone, Tamar, President, Concord, Grenville, Cochrane, Loch Fyne, Ganges, Fulmar and AFNE. February 15. Aged 85.

Robin 'Buck' Taylor. CPO Mechanician. Served 1956-79 in Ajax, Defiance, Ark Royal; also Singapore, Scotland and Raleigh. May 11. Aged 72.

Stanley Barrat. Sto/Mec HO rating. Served in Anson in the Pacific and at the Japanese surrender. May 22. Aged 84.

Ron Smith RM Colour Sergeant 44 Cdo. Served 1943-46 with 3 Commando in Burma, Myebon, Peninsula landings, Kangaw and Hill 170 where he was wounded with a shell splinter in his back. Emigrated to Australia shortly after demobilisation. Returned Serviceman Legion. May 21 in Brisbane. Aged 88.

Stan Mills. Steward. Joined Ganges and served the RN for over 30 years. Upon retirement he served as Wardroom Hall Porter for both Dryad and Nelson. April.

William 'Bill' Thompson. GOW. Served 1949-61. Joined Ganges aged 15 then Vanguard, Victory, Montclare, Hartland Point, Adamant, MFV86, Newcastle (two Far East commissions), Excellent, St Vincent and Loch Ruthven. Founder and vice president of HMS Newcastle (52-58) Association and member of Ganges Association. June 13. Aged 77.

ROYAL NAVAL ASSOCIATION

Frederick George Cubitt 'Jimmy' Green. CPO. Served 1941-53. Peacock as Seaman PO 1950-52 and a member of HMS Peacock Association; also a member, past Chairman, Treasurer and Trustee of Welwyn Garden City RNA. April 22. Aged 87.

Charles Raymond Priestley RM (SBS). Served 1943-46 in Burma and Pacific. Vice Chairman Halifax RNA. April. Aged 86.

Thomas 'Tommy' Callaghan. Chief Mechanician. Served 1940-62 in Liverpool (put out of action by bombs) he stayed in the Mediterranean and transferred to St Issey then Albacore in home waters and 1942 Landguard (mostly convoy duties in the Med and Indian Oceans). Leading Stokers course at Golden Hind, NSW Australia 1944 returning to UK 1945 via Mayina (jungle camp outside Colombo) and Wolfe. After EOWL (end of war leave) he crewed Pitcairn on her return journey to the US and returned on one of the Queens. HMNB Portsmouth 1946-48 (mechanicians course) then served in Diadem, Swiftsure, Birmingham, the 1st commission of Tiger, Relentless (Londonderry), Triumph (Chatham) and Adamant (Faslane). Past Chairman Area 12 and last founder member. Limavady branch. May 19. Aged 91.

Robert 'Bobby' McKnight. L/Airman. Served in Heron, Gannet, Daedalus, Falcon, Terror and Unicorn. Londonderry branch. May 8. Aged 82.

Lucy Ronan. Associate member of Cyprus branch, wife of the late John 'Jack' Ronan. May 23. Aged 86.

Leonard Walter 'Len' Forsythe. Joined 1943 as a 17 year-old Boy 2nd class in Foudroyant then the Scotia at Ayr for signal training. Transferred to the Patrol Service and minesweepers Big Mickie 1016 and Small Mickie 302 and swept the coast in front of Utah and Omaha beaches (D-Day landings) and the channel through to Antwerp (Operation Kalendar); also MMSs 274, 84 and HMT Gateshead. Chesham and Amersham RNA and the Patrol Service Association. May 3. Aged 85.

John 'Jackie' H Miller RM. Served in Aden. Founder of the Belfast branch and secretary for 21 years. March 6. Aged 69.

Margaret 'Peggy' Nicholson. Leading Wren. Served 1943-47 at Port Said, Alexandria and Malta. Wansbeck RNA and life member Association of Wrens. May 16. Aged 93.

William John 'Bill' Marshall. Stores Assistant. Served 1942-46. After basic training at Royal Arthur he trained as a Stores Assistant and spent six months at a shore base near Swansea. Jack Dusty in Saumarez from commissioning in June 1943 until his demob in September 1946; Russian convoys, in action against Scharnhorst 1943, off Dunkirk 1944 and the Far East. Russian Convoy Club and founder member Falmouth RNA on re-commissioning 1982; branch Standard Bearer 1985-2008 and committee member since re-commissioning; Life member of RNA February 2005. May 15. Aged 88.

Sub Lt Max Moore. Served 1943-45 in the Royal Indian Navy as a National Serviceman. Brief spell with RN Flag Officer RIN before being seconded to the land forces in Borneo and Burma as an interpreter of classified enemy information. May. Aged 84.

Ron King. Served 1955-67. Norwich branch. March 17. Aged 74.

Dennis Henry Stacey. LEM(Air). Served Daedalus, Triumph and other RN Air Stations. Cheshunt branch. February 22. Aged 82.

Irene 'Joy' Parks (née Satterthwaite). Wren Coder. Born in Rosario, Argentina and enlisted in Argentina. Served Naval Attache in Washington; also Excellent and President (Admiralty, St James). Cheshunt branch. April 20. Aged 85.

Harry Albrighton. Served 1940-45. Royal Marines, 42 Commando. Nuneaton branch. May 20. Aged 93.

FLEET AIR ARM ASSOCIATION

John Day. POAF(L). Served 1940-46. On board Ark Royal III 1941 when she was torpedoed and sunk by U-81 near Gibraltar. Greater Manchester branch FAAA and Ark Royal Association. April 8. Aged 90.

Ron Jones. POAF(E). Served 1946-54 in Excalibur, Alsager and Staffordshire. Solent branch FAAA and a regular contributor to the Greater Manchester FAAA Hangar Gen magazine and on behalf of this branch also arranged various visits to Daedalus including their annual September Service of Remembrance at the Lee-on-Solent Memorial. April.

Eric Lomas. AM1(E). Served 1942-46 Port Division Lee-on-Solent. Member of Wrekin branch since 1998. May.

Rayment 'Ray' A Castle. FAA. NA1(AH). Served 1949-51. Aboard Illustrious (1949-50) as an Aircraft Handler and founder member of HMS Illustrious Association, also Southern branch chairman 1996-97. Yarmouth branch FAAA. Norwich RNA. May 28. Aged 79.

ALGERINES ASSOCIATION

Lt Cdr James Stewart. Served in Chameleon. Aged 88.

Dennis Timbrell. Cook. Served in Serene. Canada.

Wilfred 'Wilf ' Smith. AB. Served in Sylvia. January.

John Peters. AB. Served in Truelove and Ready. March 16. Aged 85.

Raymond Cox. Sto/Mech. Served in Truelove. March 18. Aged 78.

Tom McDermott. AB. Served in Lennox. May. Aged 86.

John Atkins. O/Stwd. Served in Pluto. May 30. Aged 87.

Edward Lintern. PO. Served in Larne. June 2. Aged 89.

Entries for the Deaths' column and Swap Drafts in August's Noticeboard must be received by July 11

Heron takes the field gun title

THE sun was beating down and Portsmouth gunners were on fire, but it was the team from HMS Heron which took the honours at the Royal Navy Field Gun competition.

Staged as part of HMS Collingwood's annual open day, the field gun competition saw 20 crews from across the UK and Gibraltar giving their all in a bid to win the Brickwoods Trophy.

As the event came to a head, all eyes were on the crew from Portsmouth Naval Base, who broke the world record during the heats with a time of 1m 17.78s and were looking for their third win in a row.

But it was the team from RNAS Yeovilton which prevailed, taking the trophy back to Somerset for the first time since 2002.

Addressing the crews after the final, CinCFleet Admiral Sir Trevor Soar said: "Well done for today. This has been a spectacular day and a great competition; it's been great to watch – thank you."

The open day at the Navy's weapon engineering and warfare training establishment saw many of the training areas used by ratings and officers open to public scrutiny. Two popular areas were the High Ropes challenge, used by sailors to build confidence and trust, and the virtual reality bridge simulator, which is so realistic it can leave visitors feeling slightly seasick.

There was also a free funfair and the Defence Diving School dive tank, complete with submerged diver, who played noughts and crosses with passing children, occasionally cooling them down as the water 'overflowed'…

For the first time a team from BFBS Radio broadcast live from the site, passing messages from visitors to their families in theatre.

1971 1981 1991 2001 THE TIME OF YOUR LIVES

We flick back through the pages of Navy News to see which stories were drawing attention in past decades...



● *AB Jeremy Coombes spent 42 hours in a hot compression chamber to save the life of an Indonesian fisherman*

July 1971

A 25-year-old clearance diver helped save the life of an Indonesian fisherman by looking after him in a small and fiercely hot compression chamber in Singapore.

The fisherman, a married father of seven, had contracted a severe attack of 'bends' diving in the South China Sea, leaving him paralysed. The only hope of saving him was to recreate a deep dive and put him in a compression chamber.

AB Jeremy Coombes, of Eltham, South London, a clearance diver based in HMS Triumph, volunteered to look after the fisherman, who spoke no English.

The two spent 42 hours in the chamber, which became so hot that blocks of ice had to be placed against it to keep the temperature down.

AB Coombes had to take salt tablets to combat excessive perspiration, and could not even read to pass the time, because the pages of his book stuck together.

July 1981

THE wartime submarine HMS Alliance had been raised high and dry on to two concrete cradles at the Submarine Museum in Gosport and was expected to be open to visitors within months.

The plan was to cut two aircraft-type doors in her sides to allow easy access from gangplanks built on a newly-surfaced jetty at the end of Haslar Pontoon Road.

Plans were also announced to raise the wreck of Holland 1, the Navy's first submarine, which sank under tow to the breakers yard in 1913, and which had been found off Eddystone Lighthouse in April 1981.

Thirty years on, Alliance is showing the ravages of time, weather and pigeons. More than £5million has already been raised to restore her, but more funds are needed for the Alliance Appeal (*see page 29*).

July 1991

MORE than 60 officers and ratings from HMS Edinburgh formed a platoon in the British contingent for a ticker-tape parade in New York to welcome home troops from the Gulf War.

The British contingent, led by General Sir Peter de la Billiere, marched through the 'canyons' of New York in their tropical uniforms, led by their CO, Commander Andy Dickson. General Norman Schwarzkopf took the salute.

Edinburgh had been on exercise with the US Navy, and anti-drug operations with the US Coastguard off Florida and Belize as part of her US-Caribbean deployment.

July 2001

NAVY divers from Portsmouth were called out to three massive World War 2 bombs off the south coast in the space of two weeks.

Two German parachute mines and an air-dropped bomb, each weighing 2000lbs, were trawled up in fishing boats in a 20-mile stretch of water between Clacton and Southend.

The most spectacular operation took place at Southend when hundreds of holidaymakers crowded onto the beach and the pier to watch a team of Navy divers from Southern Diving Unit 2 make its way to the fishing vessel Freya, half a mile from shore, where they lowered the bomb back to the seabed from the fishing nets.

The bomb, a Type C German anti-shipping parachute mine, was then detonated with 4lb of plastic explosives, sending a plume more than 300 feet into the air.

Honours

The Birthday Honours list for 2011:

Promotions in and appointments to the Military Division of the Most Honourable Order of the Bath

As Companions

Rear Admiral Mark Anderson; Vice Admiral Robert George Cooling

Promotions in and appointments to the Military Division of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire

As Commanders

Rear Admiral Martin Brian Alabaster; Cdre David James Rees Dickens; Cdre David Julian Marsh; Surg Capt Mark John Midwinter

As Officers

Cdr Edward Graham Ahlgren; Capt Keith Edward Blount; Cdr Andrew John Bower; Cdr Rory John Lockton Bryan; Cdr Simon Peter Huntington; Lt Col Philip Joyce RM; Cdr Edward Stafford Main; Cdr John Vickers

As Members

Major Renny John Bulmer RM; Lt Leslie Butterworth; WO1(MW) Craig Campbell; Capt Peter John Curtis RM; WO2 Gordon Hickin RM; Sgt Matthew Robert Hill RM; Lt Cdr Debra Marie Hounsome (née Emmerson QARNNS; WO2 Andrew John Langdale RM; CPO AEM(E) George Reed; Major Gawain Ross RM; WO2 ET(ME) Roger Terence Skidmore; Lt Cdr Anthony Damian Tite; Lt Cdr Ian Ritchie Wilson RNR (SCC); WO1 (PT) Glen Young

Queen's Volunteer Reserves Medal

WO2 Stephen Peter Garrow RMR; Lt Cdr Richard Lewis RNR

Reunions

JULY 2011

Portsmouth Command Field Gunners Association: AGM and Family BBQ at the WO and Senior Rates Mess, HMS Excellent on July 16. There is something for everyone and the Organising Committee under the leadership of Pete Ruddock have pulled out all the stops for what hopefully will be a truly successful reunion. There is always room for improvement, but the camaraderie is still there and that is probably the most important element of a reunion. Please pass on to any known Pompey Fieldgunners and friends as we intend to continue the growth and eventually track down all living Pompey Fieldgunners. For more details log into http://www.portsmouthfieldgunners.org.uk or email: robdon.wyatt@ntlworld.com or tel: 023 9235 6868.

Harrier Force Association: After the disbandment of the Harrier aircraft from service last year, the Harrier Force Association (HFA) has been established to provide a focal point for anyone associated with the aircraft or its operation throughout its 40-plus years of service. Membership is free and growing with over 500 members. This summer, the HFA is holding its inaugural get-together in the old OCU hangar at RAF Wittering on Saturday July 16 2011. There will be a couple of flying displays and plenty of food, drink and music, not to mention endless Harrier banter. To register for free membership, and for details of the day, please visit http://www.hfassoc.org or tel 01780 783838 ext 7452.

AUGUST 2011

HMS Ceres (Wetherby 1946-58): The eighth reunion of HMS Ceres will be held from August 12 to 14 at the Crown Hotel, Harrogate, North Yorkshire. Anyone interested should contact Richard Knight at knight.ceres53@ntlworld.com or tel: 01937 581404.

SEPTEMBER 2011

HMS Fisgard Association: Celebrate their 15th anniversary celebrations from September 3 to 5, including a Green & White dinner and dance at Portsmouth Guildhall on September 4. It happens to coincide with all apprentices of series 11, 12 and 13 who joined HMS Fisgard 60 years ago and we would like to get as many members and their wives/partners there for the event. For more information contact Lt Cdr Bill Legg at bill.legg@talktalk.net or tel 01329 286262.

HMS Jamaica Association: Reunion will take place at Great Yarmouth from September 16 to 18. For details contact Bill Dancey on 01558 685386.

Military Hovercraft Personnel wanted: Did you serve in the Interservice Hovercraft Unit, the Interservice Hovercraft (Trials) Unit, the Naval Hovercraft (Trials) Unit, 200 Hovercraft Squadron RCT, the Far East detachment, or are currently serving in 539 Assault Squadron Royal Marines? If so, you are invited to attend an event to commemorate 50 years of UK Military hovercraft involvement. Seahorse 50 will be held at Browndown, Gosport, from September 9 to 12. The first two days will be for schools, colleges and Cadets (9th) military and ex-military (10th) and the last two days open to the public. For more information contact Brian Russell at brianatjellicoe@aol.com or tel: 023 9258 4371.

Algerine Association Reunion: The reunion will take place from September 19 to 26 at the Mill Rythe Holiday Village, Hayling Island. The cost is £206 per person, half board. For more details contact George Patience on 01456 450659 or Mike Hutchins on 01903 766895.

OCTOBER 2011

HMS Mauritius (Shore Base): If you served on the island of Mauritius between 1962-1976 you may be interested in the fourth reunion that is being held in the WO, SR & SNCO's Mess at HMS Nelson, Portsmouth on October 8. More information is available from Tina Lowe (née Hills) at tina.lowe3@ntlworld.com or tel: 01329 843347.

HMS Iron Duke Reunion at the Maritime Social Club, Devonport on October 29. All Iron Duke Ships Company, old and new are welcome. Please contact Dave 'Bonny' Tyler via Facebook or davetyler@rya-online.net or tel: 07517 532012.

HMS Lowestoft: A reunion to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the commissioning of HMS Lowestoft will be held on October 28 and 29 at the King Charles Hotel, Chatham. The reunion is open to all her served in her. For more details contact Ian Mackenzie at ian.mackenzie480@virgin.net or tel: 01935 825672.

Regulating Branch & Royal Navy Police Association: Annual reunion takes place from October 7 to 8. For more information contact the Social secretary, W Dick at maawgd@sky.com or tel: 023 9234 5228.

Queen's School Rheindahlen Association: Reunion will be held at the Holiday Inn, Telford from October 14 to 15. For more information about the reunion and membership see the website at http://www.queensschoolrheindahlenassociation.co.uk/ or tel: 01934 418998.

NOVEMBER 2011

HMS Bristol Association: 2011 AGM and reunion takes place on November 19 with the reception, AGM and ship's tour onboard HMS Bristol, Whale Island, Portsmouth. Reunion to be held in GI's Mess, Whale Island Reception/AGM: 1800 Reunion: 1900 onwards. Cold buffet, bar, music and raffle. Members, Non-members, families and friends all welcome. For more information and to advise your attendance kindly contact: Peter 'Bungy' Featherstone-Williams at peter.featherstone-williams@astrium.eads.net or tel: 07824 487054 Gary Whitmarsh at gsm429@btinternet.com or tel: 07768 310880.

HMS Sovereign: The City of Derby's affiliated boat for 30 plus years. All officers and ships' companies of Sovereign invited for a re-visit to City with the Freedom of the City to the Submarine Service to celebrate a long and happy affiliation and mini reunion at our SA Traf and Affiliated Boats Dinner on November 5 at the Spot Banqueting Suite, Derby – £25pp. Further details from Terry Hall at nobbyderbysa@yahoo.co.uk or SAE to Terry Hall, 69 Station Road, Stanley Village, Derbyshire, DE7 6FB.

HMS Mohawk Association: Reunion will take place at the Bancroft Hotel, Torquay from November 4 to 7. For further details cantact the secretary, Neville Saunders at nevillesaunders@hotmail.co.uk or tel: 01329 230187.

MAY 2012

Bulwark, Albion & Centaur Association: The 2012 AGM & Reunion Weekend is confirmed for the Hilton Hotel, North Promenade, Blackpool commencing May 11. Three night package including Private Dinner and entertainment for just £130. Pool/Sauna available and on site parking. Please contact the Secretary, Denis Askham at dnsaskhm@aol.com or Tel: 01261 861742 or 07773 651213.

HMS Sheffield 30th Falklands Reunion 2012: Calling all HMS Sheffields D80,1982. HMS Sheffield 30th Reunion May 4 to 6 2012 at the Royal Maritime Club, Queen Street, Portsmouth. Any interest in this event, please contact Guy 'Tug' Wilson at guy4god.wilson@hotmail.com or tel: 023 9235 0494.

Royal Naval Hospital Haslar: The 2nd RNH Haslar Reunion for all RN Medics and Naval Nurses who trained or served there between 1955 and 1985 will be held in Gosport over from May 4 to 7, 2012. A minimum of three separate events over the weekend including a Sunday DTS with Shep Woolley entertaining. Tickets £25 per head for the weekend with all profits to the Royal British Legion Poppy Appeal. Contact David Rawson via Facebook.com/RNH Haslar Reunion Group or by email to david@sudcotes.karoo.co.uk or write to 5 Savery Street, Hull, East Yorkshire HU9 3BG.

MV Norland: All RN and Army personnel who served as ship's company in the Norland during the South Atlantic Campaign are invited to a reunion in Hampshire in May 2012. For further details please contact Ian Hughes at ian.bhughes@btopenworld.com or tel: 01525 717850.

SEPTEMBER 2012

HMS Ganges, 38 Recruitment, 1972: Frobisher 17 Mess, Boy-entry Junior Seamen 2nd Class, later Comms ratings. Instructor was CY Geoff Hone. A 40-years reunion is planned for the September 28 to 30, 2012, at the Union Jack Club, Waterloo. Please contact Jenks at mark.jenkinson@europe.ups.com for further details and registration or write to Finnboda kajvagen 15, 13173 Nacka, Stockholm, Sweden.

Ask Jack

Roger Livermore: I am trying to contact my cousin Roger Livermore who I believe was a chef serving originally in the Army but who transferred to the Navy in the late 1970s; last known living in Eastney in the 1980s with his wife Sharon and children Craig and Dawn. If anyone is in contact with him could they please pass on a message that Lisa would like to get in touch. Contact Lisa Livermore at llivermore@smeeandford.co.uk or tel 07754 032202.

HMS Appledore and Appledore 2, Instow and Fremington camps: Chris Thomas is researching Royal Marine presence in this area around the time of August 1945 and would be grateful for any photographs, memorabilia and personal recollections. Email: christhomas2@btconnect.com or tel 01239 682602.

Peter Fallon: Does anyone remember my late father, POME Peter Fallon. He was based in Plymouth. Had he been alive today, he would be 74 years old. If anyone was at sea with him in August to December 1966, could you contact Vincent Keegan at wolverine.dynax@ntlworld.com or tel: 07889 506064.

Reginald 'Nobby' Hall: Seeking anyone who knew my late grandfather, 'Nobby' Hall. He came from Reading and joined the navy as a 16 year old in 1942. His first ship, HMS Nelson was one that he loved and remained his favourite. He also served in Malta, both during and after the war, we also know he visited Australia (possibly Sydney), New York and Manus Island. As far as we know he was an AB Gunner, possibly part of the team that fired the 'Pom-pom' guns on Nelson and his rating was AA3. Some of the ships in which he served are: St George, Nelson, Victory, Excellent, Saker, Assistance, Malta (St Angelo, Euroclydon and Phoenicia), Pembroke, Dolphin and Hornet. If you remember him contact Sara Blunt at sarajhall@btinternet.com or tel: 0118 9744666.

HMS Ashanti Commission 1965-67: ex LME Ron Powell, who now lives in a place called Cobram, north of Melbourne, Australia is trying to find the Best Man from his wedding on August 2, 1967. The 'best man' was LME R Lowes, both of whom served in the Ashanti. Ron would be over the moon to get in touch again. If you can help with this contact Mervyn Evans at mervyn.evans7@btinternet.com or tel: 01227 361947, also from the Ashanti.

Frank Wilson: Seeking information about my late uncle Able Seaman Steward Francis John Muirhead Wilson. He did his National Service at Victoria Barracks between 1956 and 1958. He then went on to serve in the RNR until 1965. Some of the ships he served in are HMS Victory, Cochrane, Teaser and Sea Eagle. If you can help contact David Stewart at davidstewart1908@hotmail.co.uk or tel: 0131 477 6387.

Peter (I or J) Gray: Seeking information regarding Peter Gray's military career, having come across his military log book. The log has some pages missing at the beginning so there is no reference to his service number. There is an emblem on the front of the log showing the Naval crown, the White Ensign and the French Tricoleur. According to the log, in March 1896 he possibly joined the Engineering Corps (Building). In February 1900, he joined HMS Pique, Plymouth for China Commission and was awarded a medal. In October 1904 he joined HMS Undaunted (Gunnery School). In July 1905 was told to report to RM Barracks, Chatham and join as a Marine; training, 14 days leave and time in Barracks. In October 1905 he joined HMS Sirius, Devonport for South Africa Commission. In March 1909 he was discharged from Marines at RM Barracks, Stonehouse. The writer asks 'Would he have transferred from the Army to the Marines?' If you can help please contact Graham Box on 0117 9509646 or write to The Bungalow, Cribbs Causeway, Bristol BS10 7TL.

James Dugdale: Seeking any information about my grandad, James Dugdale. I know that he served in the Royal Navy but do not know when, where or for how long he served. If anyone who knew him could get in touch it would be appreciated. Contact LET(ME) Traf Algar at 350-letme10@a.dii.mod.uk or tel: 07769 221284 or write to 21 Andurn Close, Elburton, Plymouth, Devon PL9 8UJ.

Seaman George Rashleigh: I recently discovered George Rashliegh's medals and would be interested to know if anyone has any information about him. I understand he served in the Mediterranean and Far East where his ship met a fatal end, but luckily he survived. If you can help contact James Murray at iain@murrayspace.co.uk or tel: 01752 567535.

Pom-pom Shell Case: I have recently purchased, on e-bay, a pom-pom shell case which is inscribed as follows: 'Royal Marines Pom.Pom Malta 1942', beneath which is the Maltese Cross and the following names: 'Sgt Darwood, Cpl Grimes, Mnes: Siddall, Newington, Foskett, Freeman, Fitch, Warner, Hebbes, and Bacon. HMS St Angelo.' The shell-case was manufactured in 1934. Please contact Tony Davie at ajdavie@btinternet.com or tel: 01256 472340.

Contact sheet

Ministry of Defence: 0870 607 4455, www.mod.uk

Royal Navy recruitment: 0845 607 5555, www.royalnavy.mod.uk

Veterans Agency: 0800 169 2277, www.veterans-uk.info

RN and RM Service records: 01283 227912, navysearchpgrc@tnt.co.uk

Royal Naval Association: 023 9272 3823, www.royal-naval-association.co.uk

Royal Navy and Royal Marines Charity: 023 9254 8076, www.rnrmc.org.uk

RNBT: 023 9269 0112 (general), 023 9266 0296 (grants), www.rnbt.org.uk

British Legion: 08457 725725, www.britishlegion.org.uk

Naval Families Federation: 023 9265 4374, www.nff.org.uk

Seafarers UK: 020 7932 0000, www.seafarers-uk.org

SSAFA Forces Help: 0845 1300 975, www.ssafa.org.uk

RN Community: www.rncom.mod.uk

Medals enquiries: 0800 085 3600

Royal Naval Museum: 023 9272 7562, www.royalnavalmuseum.org

Fleet Air Arm Museum: 01935 840565, www.fleetairarm.com

Royal Marines Museum: 023 9281 9385, www.royalmmarinesmuseum.co.uk

RN Submarine Museum: 023 9251 0354, www.rnsubmus.co.uk

National Maritime Museum: 020 8312 6565, www.nmm.ac.uk

Imperial War Museum: 020 7416 5320, www.iwm.org.uk

Assignments

Capt William J Warrender to be CO of HMS Dauntless from July 26.

Cdr Patrick G Dowsett to be CO of HMS Northumberland from May 21.

Cdr Ian H Lynn to be CO of HMS Clyde from June 7.

Cdr Benjamin E Ripley to be CO of HMS Kent from August 22.

Lt Cdr Marcus J C Hember to be CO of HMS Severn from June 21.

Sports lottery

May 21: £5,000 – **Lt C J Murphy**; £1,500 – **LH N L Shaw**; £500 – **AB1 A D Little**.

May 28: £5,000 – **AB1 N S Smith**; £1,500 – **AB2 D P Longhurst**; £500 – **LH G L Cartwright**.

June 4: £5,000 – **AB1 S A Fisher**; £1,500 – **CPO H E Broadhurst**; £500 – **LH I D H Cole**.

June 11: £5,000 – **AET A M Scurr**; £1,500 – **AB1 I K Lees**; £500 – **PO C Anderson**.

Talking Navy News

Navy News is available free of charge as a digital file on memory stick or email from Portsmouth Area Talking News for those with difficulty reading normal type. Contact 023 9269 0851 and leave a message with a contact number, or email patn-rec@hotmail.com.

Competitions

Winner of the Commemorative ceramic Nelson Ship's Decanter for the *Toast the Royal couple* competition is **Mr D Nairne**, Farlington, Portsmouth.

Winners of the *Sailor* three-DVD box set: **Mr P R Jones**, Chalfont St Peter, Bucks and **Mr J H Sparkes**, Taunton, Somerset.

Winners of the Yeovilton Air Day 2011 competition of a pair of tickets are: **Abbie Gadd**, Bournemouth; **Bill Batchelor**, Dorset; **Mick Cave**, Somerset; **Sidney Myers**, Plymouth; **Rob Gillard**, Torquay.

Swap drafts

POET (WE) McCafferty would like to swap a Plymouth draft from June 12 for a Portsmouth draft, preferably a Sonar job. Contact: 07595 999094.

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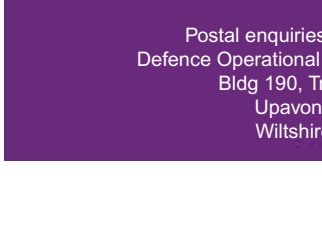
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Applicants who successfully complete the course will also be eligible for a financial award under the Defence Operational Language Award Scheme (DOLAS – DIN 2009DIN01-192). You will also qualify for additional operational language pay.

Selection is by interview, and candidates must be physically fit. Applicants must also have been released by their manning authorities for the language training and subsequent operational tour.

For further information and an application form see the following DIN:- 2010DIN07-174, or contact CPO (AWT) Paul Baynes on (civ) 01980 615362, (mil) 94344 5362, or email jtcap-dolsuwocapgen@mod.uk

Postal enquiries should be sent to:
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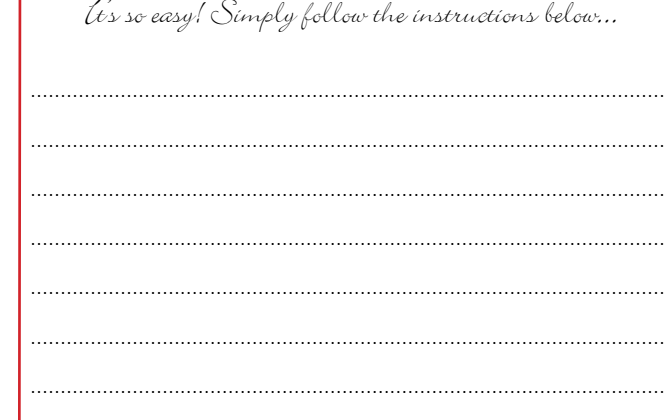
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Reservists go to work in uniform

THOUSANDS of Royal Naval Reservists are preparing to leave their work clothes aside for one day to wear their military uniforms.

Uniform to Work Day – staged as *Navy News* went to press – is a chance to demonstrate the important role that Reservists play in serving their country.

It is also part of the build-up to Armed Forces Day, when the general public are encouraged to show their appreciation for serving personnel, reservists and veterans.

One such participant is AB Ritchie Wilkinson, who is a studio manager on ITV1's *This Morning* show.

As part of his job he manages the technical side of live TV, plus crews and equipment, in a high-pressure environment.

Although he fulfilled an ambition by going into broadcasting, he also felt a yen for the Services:

"As a schoolboy, there were two career choices that I wanted to follow; one of them was to join the Royal Navy and the other was to be a film director," he said.

"After reading film and television at university I was lucky enough to get a job in TV relatively quickly.

"But I always felt that I had missed out on the opportunities of the Royal Navy.

"I saw an advert for the Royal Naval Reserves and realised then it was possible to have my cake and eat it and I relish the chances given to me, to learn new skills required by the Navy, and combine this with my full-time career."

Photographic opportunity

PHOTOGRAPHY was once banned from Bletchley Park, the wartime code-breaking centre near Milton Keynes.

Now it is positively encouraged – the National Codes Centre and birthplace of the modern computer is the subject of a photographic competition.

Winners of the inaugural 'Picture Bletchley Park' competition will find their pictures featured in the site's 2012 calendar.

For full details of the competition, which closes on September 1, see www.bparkcomp.org.uk

Pupils to run RN museum

CHILDREN will be taking over the running of a naval museum this month as part of the museum's centenary celebrations.

More than 50 Year 6 pupils from Stamshaw Junior School in Portsmouth will run the national Museum of the Royal Navy (Portsmouth) and HMS Victory, having spent some of the summer term learning about the whole operation, including the roles of curators, guides, administrators and shop workers.

And on July 13 all that preparation will come together as they take control for the day.

Learning officer Claire Jordan said: "We are all really excited to find out what the children will do when they take over the museum."

Learning at Clyde

THE UK's biggest university paid a visit to Scotland's biggest military establishment when the Open University gave workers at Faslane a taste of what's on offer.

The visit, arranged by the Clyde Learning Centre, provided briefings for prospective students on courses such as engineering, while a stall in the base's Supermess proved popular with others looking at general courses, from psychology to law.

Lt Jim Love, of the Learning Centre, said each time the OU visited the base the level of interest grows.



● *Walking in the air: Surg Lt John Glennie takes flight during the commando conditioning course at Chivenor*

Flying colours

THE ranks of the Royal Navy are scattered with Commando-trained personnel, working alongside their Royal Marines counterparts in a variety of roles and specialisations.

Four more sailors recently decided to test their fitness, grit and mental strength in pursuit of the coveted Green Beret.

Surg Lt Vijay Ahuja, Surg Lt John Glennie, Lt Aaron Sadler-Smith and LH Daniel Lawlor joined the Commando Logistic Regiment Royal Marines (CLR) on early April for a not-so-gentle introduction to commando training.

This comprehensive six-week Conditioning Course (CC) aims to, in a measured and accessible fashion, condition the applicants mentally and physically for the intensity of commando training.

If they cut the mustard, they can progress to the All Arms Commando Course (AACC).

The exceptional training infrastructure at CLR allows it to be one of only three establishments to run the conditioning course, which is a pre-requisite for attendance on the AACC.

In order to pass the commando tests and furnish them with the skills required for working within the Brigade, the CC provides the prospective green berets with the physical conditioning, mental preparation and military aspects required to succeed.

The course starts immediately on the participant's arrival at CLR.

Individuals need to ensure that, as well as comfortably meeting the fitness criteria, they also come prepared with the correct equipment – and the proper attitude.



● *Walking on water: Surg Lt Vijay Ahuja, LH Daniel Lawlor and Surg Lt John Glennie*

This is a very intense and physically demanding course, and those that prepare themselves prior to joining always stand out as the most credible candidates.

The course spends plenty of time in preparing individuals for the commando tests, but there are many other aspects included to complement their training.

They will have swimming sessions throughout the week, endure flexibility sessions in the gym, and prove themselves proficient with field skills and weapon handling as well as circuits and speed marches.

The recent CC commenced with 15 candidates from across the Army and RN.

The deliberately high intensity of the course, designed specifically to mirror elements of the AACC, soon highlighted individuals who required extra personal preparation before being considered as a viable candidate for AACC.

As a result, a close-knit team of ten – including all four of the sailors who started the course – passed all of the pre-AACC criteria with flying colours, securing them an opportunity to formally commence their AACC at the Commando Training Centre RM, at Lympstone, which was under way as *Navy News* went to press.

If you think you have the commando spirit and wish to attend the conditioning course, you must first meet the criteria.

The All Arms course is aimed at training personnel who serve or will serve either with or in support of 3 Commando Brigade RM.

This is the only recognized route for regular members of the Armed Forces, outside the Royal Marines, to become commando-trained. It is open to all ranks and gender.

For more information, first read **2010DIN07-156** then, if are still interested, make sure you have manning clearance before contacting one of the conditioning course officers.

For CLR, contact Lt RN Paul Falconer on 3cdox-clr-med oc 1 troop (DII) or telephone 93779 7159 (military) or 01271 857159 (civilian).

Summer camp at Sultan

A GROUP of blind ex-Servicemen will be gathering at HMS Sultan at the end of this month for their annual summer camp and sports competition.

Around 25 people from the St Dunstan's charity will be attending, along with their 'dogs' – sighted people who act as their guides during their week at the Gosport training establishment.

The summer camp has been a Fleet Air Arm tradition for around 60 years, though the event itself dates back nine decades to an initiative by Mrs Avis Spurway, which she ran from her own home.

On moving to Titchfield, near Gosport, after World War 2, Mrs Spurway met an admiral who offered to arrange for HMS Daedalus to host the camp, and FAA field gunners were recruited as 'dogs'.

When the airfield closed the camp moved to Sultan, and the end of the Royal Tournament field gun competition saw the pack of 'dogs' become purely volunteers.

This years's camp will be held from July 29 to August 6.

Trawler bell to be raised

THE bell of a British trawler scuttled in the Norwegian campaign of World War 2 was due to be raised from the sea bed as *Navy News* went to press.

HMT St Goran was one of four converted Hull-built trawlers on anti-submarine operations in Namsos fjord, some 100 miles north of Trondheim, in late April 1940.

Armed with just an Oerlikon 20mm cannon and World War 1-vintage Lewis light machine guns, St Goran tried to ward off waves of air attacks, but was badly damaged by near-misses, while her commanding officer was killed by a strafing Heinkel bomber.

After suffering further damage, and with reports of a German destroyer and three U-boats entering the fjord, the RNVR lieutenant who had assumed command decided to scuttle the vessel to prevent her secret anti-submarine gear falling into the hands of the Germans.

In the early hours of Mayday, her sea cocks already opened, the trawler was finished off by gunfire from a sister ship.

The bell is due to be raised by the Norwegian support vessel HNoMS Valkyrien in an event filmed by local television.

The salvage attempt was prompted by an appeal by Mr Forbes Wilson, from the Friends of Namsos War Memorial, a group which organises annual five-day visits to Norway around May 17, Norway's National Day, paying their respects at memorials and above the sunken trawlers.

Combat Flotilla Commodore *Kommandørkaptein* Rune Fromreide answered the appeal and set wheels in motion.

Open day

HMS SULTAN will hold its Families and Sports Open Day on Thursday August 4.

Amongst the attractions on offer for the event, which starts at 12.30pm, will be children's entertainers, live bands, a bar, barbecue and bouncy castles.

For further information contact LPT 'Trigger' Heming at HMS Sultan on 93843 3168 or 023 9254 3168.

Air pioneers

MAY 2011 marked the centenary of fixed wing aviation in the Royal Navy, and the anniversary has prompted the creation of a new exhibition at the Fleet Air Arm Museum in Yeovilton to honour the bravery of the early aviators.

A replica of the Short S27 flown by the early pioneers – Longmore, Gregory, Samson and Gerrard (RM) – stands close to war medals of the last survivor of the RN Air Service, Henry Allingham, who died in 2009 at the age of 113.



Georgia 'is superb role model'

A PETTY Officer Cadet from **Wallasey** unit has been awarded a Lord Lieutenant's Certificate of Merit at a ceremony in Chester.

POC Georgia Flynn *(above)*, a member of the Sixth Form at Weatherhead High School, received the award from the Lord Lieutenant of Cheshire, David Briggs.

Georgia's citation, read by Col Gerry Wells-Cole, Chief Executive of the Reserve Forces and cadets Association for the North West, stated: "She has been involved with the Sea Cadets for three years, in which time she has received the highest rating in the organisation.

"In her Cadet Leadership course at Frimley Park, she was identified as having excellent leadership potential.

"She has chaired a number of cadet committees, showing a maturity beyond her years.

"Her wider interests include gymnastics and photography – with work published in local newspapers.

"She has also won an award as Young Photographer of the Year.

"Georgia is a superb role model, and is great credit to the Sea Cadets."

The Lord-Lieutenant congratulated Georgia, adding that it was an outstanding citation, and that winners of the certificates are "a great credit to their Corps and their families."

Georgia has been offered a place at the University of Westminster, where she hopes to study film and photography in the autumn.

Methil teams take on navigation challenge

CADETS and staff from **Methil** unit spent a weekend in the Highlands at Badaquish Outdoor Centre for a gruelling orienteering challenge.

The youngsters from TS Ajax put their best foot forward against 62 experienced teams, and the Methil first team made good headway to finish in 24th place.

Unfortunately, a minor injury hampered the progress of the second team, which finished the event in 61st place.

"It was fantastic – the whole event was just great," said 14-year-old Cdt Liam Small.

"I loved the course and our instructors encouraged us every step of the way."

Fellow cadet Kelly Anderson added: "I never thought we would get 24th place – I am really pleased.

"Next year I hope we will do even better."

The unit's Commanding Officer, CPO Alan Duff, said: "The cadets worked really hard and it is wonderful to see them enjoying the challenge of competing in such spectacular surroundings – well done to all of them."

The unit's juniors have also been busy, learning the first elements of marine safety from PO Kevin Ralph.

Learning how to put on a buoyancy aid correctly and being able to check and help a fellow cadet are the foundation stones to a safe marine learning environment.

A walk around the docks at Methil, in Fife, gave the cadets a chance to learn and identify hazards.

Next it was onto rescue training and rope throwing – being able to recognise a person in difficulty in the water and throwing a rope to them can be a lifesaving skill.

"Safety is really important and the cadets are taught how to recognise dangers," said PO Ralph.

"It is great to see the cadets become confident using buoyancy and especially using the 'buddy system."

Ten-year-old Paige Puller said: "Cadets are fab – when we practise rope-throwing we have to work together.

"It's great fun and you learn loads."

Methil member LC Shaun Anderson represented the Sea Cadet Corps in the Fife and Kinross regional heat of the RBL Scotland Standard Bearers competition.

Competing against fellow Sea Cadets as well as Army candidates, Shaun put on a strong performance in a contest which demands the highest standard of dress as well as a range of precision drilling.

Shaun finished the competition in second place behind an Army cadet, who goes on to represent the area at the National Finals for the second year.

"Watching the cadets compete we found the standard is really high," said CPO Duff.

"It is the first time many of them have taken part in this competition, and to see how well they have all done is wonderful."



● *Cdt Derek Mitchell, LC Shaun Anderson, Cdt Liam Small, AC Charles Simpson, Cdt Katie Mitchell and Cdt Kelly Anderson at Badaquish*

Picture: CPO Alan Duff

Corps VIP tours New Romney

NEW Romney and District unit welcomed the Captain of the Sea Cadets, Capt Mark Windsor, for a visit.

Capt Windsor spent the evening with cadets and staff, touring TS Veteran and talking to members in the communications cabin, seamanship and engineering classes.

He was entertained for 20 minutes by the unit band with a wide repertoire of music, and said he was impressed with the skill, attention to detail and discipline of the cadets.

His visit concluded with the cadet cook stewards preparing a finger buffet enjoyed by all.

Capt Windsor commented to A/CPO Alan Bell, Officer in Charge of the unit, that for such a relatively small and distant outpost of the Sea Cadet empire New Romney was a well-organised unit with the cadets displaying good dress, bearing and ceremonial skills.

The popularity of the unit's band is clear from the great demand this year for them to play at a variety of events, including at a Submariners Day at Lydd Memorial Institute, at the New Romney Country Fair, an Emergency Services Day/ Help the Heroes event at the Jolly Fisherman in Dungeness, the opening of the sea wall at Dymchurch, the Youth Festival of Remembrance at the Leas Cliff Hall in Folkestone and the Remembrance Day Parade in Lydd.

It has already taken part in the District band competition.

LC Melissa Garside, of New Romney unit, has won the special honour of becoming one of the Lord Warden's Cadets.

Melissa joined the Cadets at 13, and overcame her initial shyness to gain a number of specialisations and qualifications over the subsequent four years.

Being a popular member of the unit, and at District level, Melissa is regarded as an excellent ambassador and helps new young cadets with encouragement and guidance.

A/CPO Alan Bell said that the whole unit is very proud and honoured by Melissa's appointment, and that it is well deserved.

Buxton holds inspection

BUXTON'S annual inspection this year took the form of a Royal Naval parade, inspected by Lt Col John Davies RM.

The unit has again been awarded a burgee in recognition of its high standards.

The parade was attended by many parents, friends and supporters of the unit, including the Mayor of Buxton and the High Peak, Cllr Graham Oakley, who was accompanied by the Mayoress, Val Oakley, the High Sheriff of Derbyshire Fiona Cannon, the President of the local Royal Naval Association, S/M Bob Taylor, the Commodore of Errwood Sailing Club, Ken Boylett, and the Chairman of North West Area Sea Cadets, Liz Stephens.

A Guard of Honour was provided by the cadets for the Inspecting Officer, and a display was presented on the topic of 'Preparing to go Sailing'.

The evening concluded with a buffet generously donated by parents and supporters, to whom the unit gives special thanks.

A cheque was presented by Buxton Round Table by way of contribution to the building fund.

Buxton has now received the Trinity rowing boat donated by the town's Rotary Club, which will add another dimension to the training facilities of the Unit.

Three out of three for Gosforth



● *Gosforth's all-conquering rowers*

THEY came, they rowed, they conquered.

Gosforth entered three teams in the Northumberland District rowing regatta, the first to be run using the Trinity 500s of the TS Northumbria boat station.

And all three teams – Junior and Open Boys, and Junior Girls – were victorious, a fitting reward for all the hard work done in training over the past few months.

CPO Chris Healy, CO of the Gosforth unit, said: "The cadets who attended today were a credit to themselves and the unit.

"To have every person from Dauntless who entered going back to the unit with a gold medal is fantastic."

The cadets were preparing for the Northern Area rowing regatta, to be staged as *Navy News* went to press.



● *The Lord Lieutenant of Wiltshire, John Bush, embarks on the River Avon in a Trowbridge unit Trinity 500*

VIPs join river row-past

THE Lord Lieutenant of Wiltshire, John Bush, and his wife Pamela boarded two smart new rowing boats for a quick voyage up and down the river outside Bradford-on-Avon, rowed by the boats' delighted new owners, **Trowbridge** unit.

The cadets, boys and girls aged between 10 and 18 and drawn from the Trowbridge, Frome and Westbury area, had earlier watched proudly as their two new Trinity 500 rowing boats, Achilles and Ajax, were ceremonially named (with a splash of orange juice) by Mrs Bush and Lady Hill, the wife of the unit president Vice Admiral Sir Robert Hill.

Cdr Alick Moore, chairman of the unit management committee, thanked the chairmen of the Trowbridge and District White Ensign Association and Frome RNA for their generous donations towards the cost of the boats, and noted the significant contributions made by a grant from the Lottery 'Awards for All' and other generous private individuals.

The cadets demonstrated their newly-learned skills by 'rowing past' in style and by taking the Lord Lieutenant and Mrs Bush for a ceremonial row-past.

"The objective of having these boats is to give young people an opportunity for serious fun in a safe and disciplined way," said Cdr Moore.

"Time on the water encourages self-confidence, a pride in their achievements and team spirit."

The afternoon's activities demonstrated how much the cadets enjoyed using their new boats and how far their range of activities has been extended.

SEA CADETS

Swindon get new wheels

SWINDON unit has taken delivery of a brand new £30,000 minibus – paid for entirely from funds raised by members.

The 17-seater Ford Transit, which replaces an old, unreliable vehicle, was presented to the cadets at the unit's headquarters in Upham Road at the beginning of May.

The unit has used a second-hand 1998-registered bus for the past five years, but in recent times it had become unreliable and adult organisers had been forced, on occasions, to resort to rented transport.

After investigating buying a used bus, the unit found that organisations would not support a used vehicle purchase, so it was back to the drawing board.

Then the unit was offered a donation by way of a Ford discount from a family member, which was the catalyst to making the decision to buy a new bus.

It was bought after a two-year appeal which saw the unit raise funds by organising events, and applying for grants and donations from generous businesses, individuals and organisations.

Grants were received from the Big Lottery Fund Awards for All, the Wiltshire Community Foundation for Wiltshire and Swindon Grass Roots Grant, the Garfield Weston Foundation and donations received from the John Rayner Charitable Trust, Co-op Midcounties, the Masonic Lodge, SSAFA, Tyco, Deacons, and Swindon Lions and the Ford dealership.

Over the past couple of years the unit has established good links with local companies who have regularly helped by enabling Swindon to run their own fundraising events – patrons include Arkells Brewery, Co-op Stores Old Town, Deacons Jewellers, Barbury Shooting, Wiltshire Golf and Country Club, Martin Robson, Defence Academy, Old Town Hardware, Magnum Wines, Juvals, Microprop, the local MP, the Mayor and many more.

Cadets and staff also raised funds by numerous activities including bag packing, the unit Christmas draw, Swindon Old Town Christmas Lights support and the annual Swindon Sea Cadet Fundraising Ball.

RN takes top prize in blustery regatta

SEA Cadets and the Royal Navy vied for the big prizes during the Royalist Regatta in the Solent – and the Senior Service prevailed.

Now in its 14th year, the regatta attracted more boat sponsors than ever before – each boat in the flotilla of 13 boats which took part had a backer, thereby raising money for the Corps.

Racing in Sunsail Sunfast 37 yachts, the 105 competitors had their eyes on the main prize, the Shipwrights Trophy, which was last year won by PMI Healthcare.

Amongst the crews were 17-year-old cadets from **Edmonton** and **Gosport** units.

The event features practice sessions to give crews the chance to gets a feel for the yachts and to foster team spirit, as well as taking their boats around the racing course.

Even those who are old hands at the Royalist Regatta found race day itself an exciting affair.

Winds of 20 knots made conditions challenging, and the Royal Navy and Fortitude (Fortvale Engineering) boats made most of the early running, taking the top two places ahead of Heath Lambert in the first race.

Foreland Shipping and Sunshine (Bernard Sunley Charitable Trust) showed well in the second race, coming second and third, respectively.

The Management Consultant/ Shipwrights team started to show their true worth by Race 3 with a third place.

Although the Haberdashers got off to a slow start, they battled away and eventually walked off with the Bonham's Telescope "for the crew that demonstrated the most need thereof"...

The challenging weather conditions brought an early halt to racing, with the Royal Thames Yacht Club committee deciding to bring the competition to a close after the fourth race.

The yachts all headed back to base – Gunwharf Quays, in Portsmouth – in good time for dinner on HMS Warrior 1860.

Fundraising efforts on the night yielded a welcome £5,070, with the generous Edward Sagar Fort from the Fortvale Engineering crew entering himself into various bidding wars.

The top prize went to the Royal Navy, with Fortvale Engineering Ltd second and the Worshipful Company of Actuaries & Edmonton Sea Cadets third.

The City Cup went to the Worshipful Company of Management Consultants and Worshipful Company of Shipwrights, the best-dressed crew was deemed to be that of Yusen Logistics, the Bonhams Scope went to the Worshipful Company of Haberdashers and the dishiest crew was the Royal Navy.



● *Musicians from Poole unit entertain Royalist Regatta guests aboard HMS Warrior 1860 in Portsmouth*



● *The Worshipful Company of Actuaries & Edmonton Sea cadets, who took third place overall in the Royalist Regatta*



Captain does the honours

CAPTAIN of the Sea Cadets Capt Mark Windsor helped Leading Junior Cadet Alex Plummer cut the ribbon to officially open **Kendal** unit's new £100,000 extension.

With funding provided by the Big Lottery through ITV's The People's Millions scheme, the Frieda Scott Charitable Trust and the MSSC, the Unit Management Committee, led by former RN Commander and unit chairman Alan Brough, were able to afford a two-storey extension.

In doing so they gained two new classrooms, a store, a new galley and a much-needed upgrade to the existing heads and office areas.

After officially opening the extension and enjoying the hospitality of unit CO S/Lt (SCC) Clive Sumpter and his staff, Capt Windsor said: "After 24 years since the last visit of the Captain of the Sea Cadets to Kendal unit it was my great privilege and pleasure to join in the momentous celebrations of the very significant refurbishments to their HQ.

"I found the cadets and volunteers to be in great heart and it is clear that our cadets are enjoying a wonderful life-enhancing experience due to the dedication and commitment of our excellent adult volunteers."

Boating barbie

CADETS who use the **Liverpool District** boating station at Knowsley Lake celebrated a £500 donation from the Fleet Air Arm Officers' Association with a barbecue for their benefactors.

Almost 50 cadets took to the water in boats during the event, which also welcomed members of the Merseyside branch of the MSSC who donated money towards a new roof.

Cadets are in Vogue

THOSE *Navy News* readers who also subscribe to *Vogue* will have noticed a smattering of Sea Cadets in the May issue.

Cadets from six **London** and **Southern** Area units were invited to take part in a Mario Testino photo shoot to celebrate the Royal wedding.

Amongst those taking part were a quartet from **Reigate** unit – LC Sarah Chatfield and ACs Nicole Lambert, Gemma Cooper and Conner Hall – who travelled to West London for the event at Syon Park.

The cadets posed with a model in a £5,500 Marchesa hand-embriodered fishtail tulle gown.

The other units involved were **Southwark**, **Farnham**, **Fleet and Aldershot**, **Walton-on-the-Naze**, **Sheppey** and **Medway Towns**.

Trio promoted

GATESHEAD unit celebrated the promotion of three Able Cadets to Leading Cadet.

CO CPO (SCC) Lesley Somerville held a Captain's Table for request men, witnessed by members of the unit, where she commended the trio for their hard work and thanked them for helping to train younger colleagues.

The three are Kyle Ellison, Mathew Tuckey and Jason Watson.

The evening ended with the presentation of a 2010 efficiency pennant to the unit.

Penzance reign supreme

PENZANCE completed their progression through the district (Cornwall) and area (South West) drill and ceremonial competitions to take the honours at the National event.

The squad were last to take to the parade ground on the Saturday afternoon, and performed to the highest standard to see off the competition from Northern Ireland, Northern, North West, Southern, London and – their closest rivals – Eastern areas.

The performance by the 13 cadets was rewarded with all four trophies in their categories.

The first was for best Dressed Squad, then Best Squad Commander (AC Rebecca James), followed by the Best Arena Display and Overall Squad Winners.

The cadets have been training hard for the event since January, attending sessions on Mondays, Wednesdays and Thursday evenings and many Sundays as well.

Led by AC James, the squad consisted of LC Alex Rodger, OC Ollie Rodger, OC Gaby Hook, AC Ben Hardy, AC Zoe Scrivens, AC Jodie Simons, Cdt Kallula Healy, Cdt Abbie Palmer, AC Charlie Wheeler, OC Ben Scanlan, LC Kevin Carpenter and AC Kensa Tremethick.

The squad was trained by PO (SCC) Matt Bird.

Bubble bursts for five-a-side teams

CADETS from **Chorley**, **Blackburn** and **Wigan** units took part in the Royal British Legion's 90th anniversary celebrations – clad in bubbles...

Five-a-side teams from the Sea Cadets and Royal Marines Cadets competed against their Army and RAF equivalents in a tri-Service competition with a difference.

Each team member was in a bubble, and the goalkeepers were blindfolded.

It proved great fun, but the bubbles took a hammering from the competitive cadets, with the contest being rescheduled as a four-a-side.

The final was decided on penalty shoot-outs (*sans* bubbles but with goalkeepers still blindfolded), and the final result was that the Army cadets took the laurels, with the Air Training Corps second and the RM Cadets consigning the Sea cadets to fourth place.

The matches were interspersed with a ski-run competition – a race between teams standing on large wooden skis (also known as 'stompers' or 'centipedes').

And Chorley restored the Senior Service's pride by taking the prize in this competition, ahead of the Army cadets and their Royal Marines compatriots from Blackburn and Wigan, who managed third place.

The event was part of the Chorley Smile Picnic in the Park, held in partnership with the RBL, and as well as raising money for local charities there was plenty of fun to be had, despite the dreadful weather, including street theatre, fairground rides, face painting and climbing walls.

Southport praised for shoebox effort



SOUTHPORT cadets have won praise from a Service charity for their efforts in supporting troops overseas.

Stephen Parfitt and his wife Tina are the Southport and West Lancashire coordinators for Support Our Soldiers, and one of the charity's main initiatives is sending shoeboxes to the troops in Afghanistan 11 months of the year – it is one of only four charities authorised by the MOD and BFPO.

Writing to Peter Hopkins, the Sea Cadets Business Management Director North West, Stephen said: "I'm writing to you in praise of all the crew on board TS Active.

"They donated quite a significant amount of boxes towards the Christmas 2010 appeal.

"Then just four months later they donated 29 boxes for the troops, which is truly amazing when you consider the size of the crew.

"All the crew of TS Active deserve an accolade for not only their generosity but showing the respect and bond all our Armed Forces show when in a war zone.

"Though we are called Support Our Soldiers we support all the Service personnel serving out in Afghanistan."

Stephen concludes: "The crew of TS Active have shown the value the Sea Cadet force has in today's society.

"The officers have obviously instilled into the crew the very virtue of putting others first and thinking of their fellow man.

"When I speak at Southport Sea Cadets, and even whilst writing this email, I feel an immense sense of pride not only in the crew of TS Active but in the Sea Cadets organisation."

Helping heroes at Spotland

ROCHDALE unit was invited to provide a guard of honour and help collect loose change at a special Help for Heroes Day staged by the Rochdale Hornets rugby league team.

The sporting action at Spotland got under way with a special match between the Rochdale Town Team and the Royal Navy – the Brothers.

And a lively match ended up 18-18, with the Navy taking an early lead, conceding the initiative to fall behind then rallying in the closing stages to tie the match with a try in the dying minutes.

Serving and ex-Servicemen and women were admitted to the ground free, and were further rewarded by an impressive display from the home team in a Co-operative Championship 1 fixture against Gateshead Thunder – the Thunder being muted as they were routed by the home side to the tune of 68-0.

Further reward

THE CO of **Stewartry** unit, Lt (SCC) Tom Plummer RNR, has been awarded his second Clasp to the Cadet Forces Medal.

The Cadet Forces Medal and Clasps are awarded to officers and uniformed adult instructors in recognition of long service of proved capacity in the Cadet Forces.

Twelve years reckonable service by officers and uniformed adult instructors is required for the award of the medal, with six years further service required for each subsequent Clasp – though before 1991, eight years service was required for each Clasp.

Thus the second Clasp to his medal signifies 26 years of adult service to the Corps by Lt Plummer.

Winning debut

FINCHLEY cadets won their district shooting competition – an impressive start to the unit's membership of their new district.

Congratulations to LS Connor Geraghty, AC Leanne Sayers, OC German Moreno-Perez, and especially to AC Brendan O'Gorman, who won the Best Shot of the Competition award.

Marathon walk along Essex coast

MORE than 20 cadets and staff from **Walton-on-the-Naze** took part in a seven-mile sponsored wheelchair marathon from Walton Pier along the promenade to Clacton Pier.

A force seven NE wind forced the group of 21 to reverse their route, foregoing the glory of finishing on home turf for the benefit of a breeze at their backs.

The British Red Cross supplied all the wheelchairs, and the group's logistical planning proved worthwhile as punctures, loose wheels and the like were swiftly dealt with by CPO Ian Richards in the support minibus.

Commanding Officer Lt (SCC) Gary Dodd RNR said the event had given cadets a brief insight into the life of a wheelchair-user.

Sponsorship is still being collected but early indications have shown that the cadets have raised more than £800 for the charity Whizz-Kidz.

Anyone wishing to help the cadets reach their goal of £5,000 by the end of the year can donate via the website http://uk.virginmoneygiving.com/waltonseacadets

The next major event in September will see intrepid cadets rowing 21 miles up the Thames in the Great River Race.

This will also go towards providing customised mobility equipment, such as manual or powered wheelchairs, wheelchair skills training, specialist advice and life skills, for local disabled youngsters through Whizz-Kidz, giving people more independence and a chance to enjoy a more active life.



● *Cadets and staff from Walton-on-the-Naze unit at the end of their seven-mile fund-raising marathon along the coast from Walton*

Gloucester unit bid farewell to warship

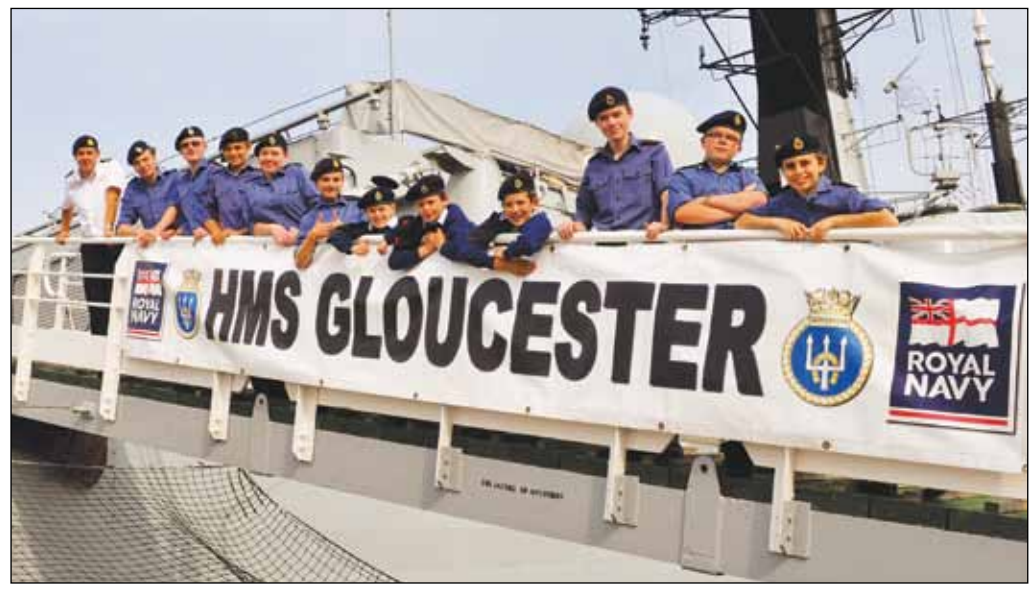
MEMBERS of **Gloucester** unit bade a fond farewell to their ship when she called in at a nearby port.

Youngsters, staff and volunteers from the unit made their way to Avonmouth Docks when their affiliated ship, Type 42 destroyer HMS Gloucester stopped off during the final weeks of her service.

The group met members of the crew and were given a final tour of certain areas of the ship, from the Bridge to the Operations Room.

S/Lt (SCC) Benjamin Nash RNR, the unit's Commanding Officer, said: "The opportunity to visit the ship was great, and it was slightly emotional to know that it was the last time the cadets could visit the ship affiliated to their unit and the city.

"A huge thanks to the Commanding Officer and crew of HMS Gloucester, who have continued to support Gloucester Sea Cadets for many years."



● *Members of Gloucester unit pay a final visit to their affiliated destroyer in Avonmouth Docks*

Keira takes memorial trophy

LC KEIRA Yeoman, of **800 NAS SCC**, has been awarded the Pollock Memorial Award for 2010 from the District Officer of Northants and Leicester District, Lt Cdr (SCC) Perry RNR.

The David & Peter Pollock Memorial Prize was given by the relatives of Patrick Pollock, who was drowned in 1933 while sailing in the Solent.

It is awarded annually to the cadet who obtains the highest examination mark on the Leading Cadets Advancement Course at SCTC during the year.

The prize takes the form of an inscribed silver-plated boatswain's call in an engraved case, which is retained by the winning cadet.

LC Yeoman was also selected to represent the United Kingdom in the international cadet exchange to Portugal, held in April.

Hastings win new contest

HASTINGS unit members have claimed the inaugural Junior Sea Cadets piping title at the **Southern** Area regional drill and piping competition.

Ellese Murphy, Christian Stanley and Oscar Phillips were the successful pipers, who proved their worth alongside the unit's senior unarmed squad, who took the title of best-dressed squad.

AC Jamie Shaw also put in a strong showing, just being pipped to the title of best squad commander.

CO Lt (SCC) Alison Brennan-Wright RNR paid tribute to the parents and adult volunteers who put in so much effort, not just for the competition but throughout the year.



● *A practical session at the Southern Area surf kayak training weekend*

Group makes waves

SOUTHERN Area cadets took to the surf this spring to develop future surf kayak leaders for the Corps in a programme funded by Sport England and supported by the British Canoe Union.

The first part of the programme involved training for the BCU 4 Star Surf Leader Award.

The group headed to Cornwall from their units in Surrey, Sussex and Hampshire to meet Sam Roberts, a BCU Level 5 Surf Coach.

Training included assessing surf conditions, identifying the most suitable location for group surfing and session management.

The group took to the surf to show off their skills through a mixture of sessions afloat, followed by time on the beach for reflection and further coaching.

The conditions provided an ideal opportunity for the group to try out the Sea Cadets' new surf kayaks and to put them to use with some surf rescue scenarios.

Each member then took a turn to apply their new leadership skills and take control of the group in the surf zone.

For some this was their first taste of being in charge of a paddling group on moving water.

In all an excellent weekend of surf and leadership training – with part two to come in the autumn.

Sea Cadets and ATC share HQ

THE Sea and Army Cadets in **Worcester** are now mess mates at a new cadet centre in the city which has been formally opened by the Lord Lieutenant of Worcestershire, Michael Brinton.

The new facility was named The John Hewlett Cadet Training Centre after ex-CPO John Hewlett, a Worcester man who carried out wartime service as a senior rate in one of a number of 'special repair squads'.

This involved carrying out temporary repairs to damaged ships hit by Japanese kamikaze pilots in the Pacific.

John left the Royal Navy in 1948, and from then until his death in 2008 at the age of 92, John – who also served in HMS Chaser – was a stalwart member of the Worcester branch of the Royal British Legion in the role of president and chairman.

Apart from leading the remembrance of his fallen wartime comrades from 1948 until just before his death, John helped to raise more than £380,000 for the national Poppy Appeal and was well known for his support of the city's cadets.

As recognition for his services, John was awarded the MBE a few days before his death.

His daughter, Pauline Lane, was guest of honour at the ceremony, together with many of the cadets' parents, guardians and friends.



● *From left: Pauline Lane, Josh Davis, Joe Taylor and the Lord Lieutenant of Worcestershire, Michael Brinton, at the opening of the new cadet centre in Worcester* Picture: Worcester News

In his address the Lord Lieutenant said that CPO Hewlett was "a faithful sailor from the faithful city" and Mrs Lane said her father "was always very proud of all that the cadets did and achieved and would have been very honoured and proud to have the cadet centre named after him."

Col (Retd) Tim Weeks, Chief Executive at the West Midland Reserve Forces & Cadets Association, said: "As the organisation responsible for supporting cadets throughout the West Midlands, we are delighted to have been able to provide this splendid new facility for the Sea Cadets and Army Cadets in Worcester, and we wish both units every success for the future."

Paula Dyde, chairman of the city's Sea Cadet unit, thanked Lt Col Andy Johnson and his team for their support and assistance in helping to make the event such a special occasion.

CO Rob Mountford said: "We have an impressive building here for the young people of Worcester to take advantage of; however we would welcome more adult support in the form of instructors and unit management team."

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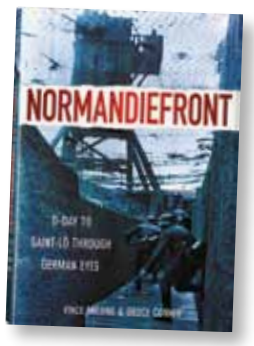
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REVIEW



We fought them on the beaches

ON JUNE 6 1944, the liberation of Normandy largely went according to plan.

Four out of the five beaches assigned to the landing forces were seized. Only at one did the invasion threaten to miscarry: Omaha.

That it did is down to the men of the German 352nd Infantry Division, whose defiant story is told by Vince Milano and Bruce and Conner in the exhaustive **Normandiefront: D-Day to Saint Lô through German Eyes** (*History Press*, £20 ISBN 978-0752459783).

Roughly half their book is devoted to the run-up to and fighting on D-Day, the remainder of the volume shifts inland until 42 days later the 352nd were wiped out at St Lô.

The authors interviewed numerous veterans of what might be considered an 'unsexy' unit (books on the Waffen SS are legion, but accounts from the German Army much less so) to plug an important gap in our understanding of D-Day and the first month's fighting in Normandy.

Indeed, the surviving members of the division proved incredibly forthcoming with testimonies, personal papers, photographs.

These men shared many of the same apprehensions as the Americans about to assault the sands.

"The sweat rolled down my brow as I watched these boats come closer and closer," recalled Karl Wegner, then 19. "My stomach was in knots."

As the first GIs moved ashore Wegner, on the western edge of Omaha near the village of Vierville, the *Obergrenadier* – a senior private – reluctantly opened fire.

"The MG roared, sending hot lead into the men running along the beach," he told the authors half a century later.

"I saw some go down, I knew I hit them. My mind rationalised it; this was war. Even so it left a sour taste in my mouth. Now was not the time to think of right or wrong, only of survival."

Such experiences pepper what is a very human account about men who, as the grandson of one of the 352nd's regimental commanders says, fought and died "for the wrong cause" but "deserve respect for what they accomplished in Normandy".

This book is another important piece in the enormous Normandy jigsaw and should be on the reading list of anyone interested in 'the other side of the wire' on D-Day.

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A bias for action

JOHN McLean is a barrister as well as an author of 13 books of fiction and non-fiction. He was also an officer in the Royal New Zealand Naval Volunteer Reserve, so presumably is New Zealand based.

His latest work is an ambitious one: discussing the role of the Royal Navy in the Pacific from the first voyage of Captain Cook in 1769 to the withdrawal from Hong Kong in 1997, *writes Prof Eric Grove of the University of Salford*.

McLean's intention was not to produce a proper history but a set of chapters, a sort of historical album, describing the various activities of the ships of the Royal Navy deployed in the Pacific region over that long period. Although the order of the book is broadly chronological, each chapter is intended to stand more or less on its own.

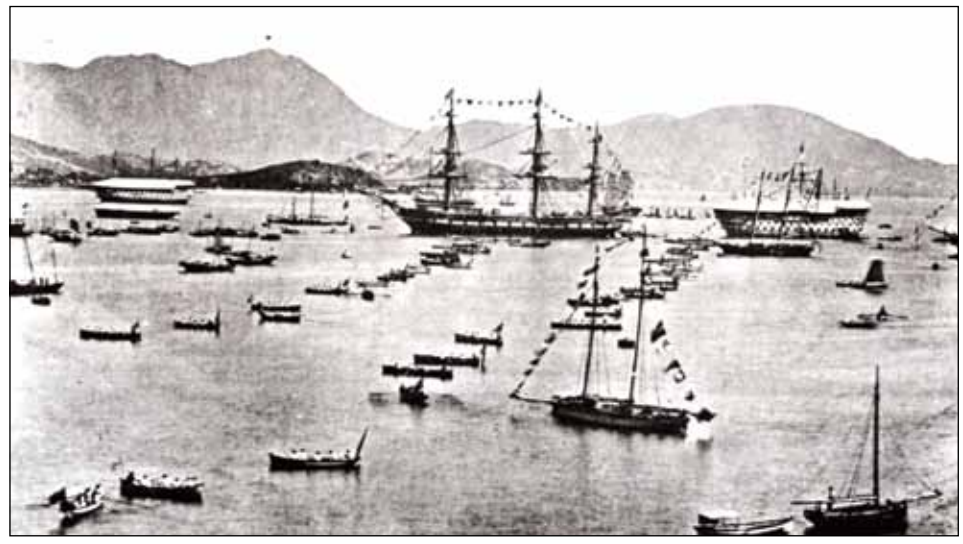
McLean's thesis is that, "by almost singlehandedly bringing peace, order and security to the Pacific the Royal Navy carved for itself the honour of being the most positive factor in the development of the peaceful trade of the world's largest ocean."

Hence, his title, **A Mission of Honour: The Royal Navy in the Pacific 1769 to 1997** (*Winter Productions*, £30 ISBN 1 872970 23 0)

This aim is a laudable one. The Royal Navy did play a highly-positive and stabilising role, especially in exercising the *Pax Britannica* in the Pacific in the 19th Century.

The strength of the book is the coverage of this period, especially where the author utilises original Antipodean sources to shed light on matters now largely forgotten, such as the loss of the corvette HMS Orpheus off Manukau Harbour in New Zealand in 1863, the actions against pirates in the South China Sea in the 1840s and the Navy's key contribution to the Maori Wars.

It would probably have been better if the author had confined himself to this period as the coverage of later years becomes rather thin, doing little to enlarge our understanding of well-known events such as the Battle of Coronel, the sinking of Prince of Wales and Repulse and the activities of the British Pacific Fleet. There



● *Ships ceremonially dressed in Hong Kong harbour in November 1869 for the visit of the Duke of Edinburgh who commanded HMS Galatea – the wooden screw frigate in the centre of this photograph – on her world tour*

The Grove Review

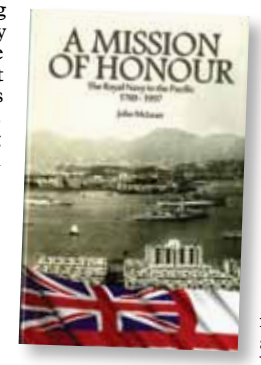
are some important gaps with nothing about RN operations against Indonesia in the 1960s. There are also some errors, for example, the 'Prince of Wales' sinking in one of the pictures is actually HMS Exeter.

These, however, are not the book's major faults. Taking the reader by a diminishing level of surprise, but increasing levels of incredulity turning to hilarity as he or she works through the book, we are presented with what can only be described as totally unnecessary and often irrelevant rants against those the author does not like.

Quite a large number of groups and things come in for Mr McLean's ire, among others, Americans (with some particularly offensive comments about President Eisenhower), Chinese of every political persuasion, missionaries of all denominations (the comments on whom verge on the libelous!), current anti-drug operations in the Carribbean, British governments of both parties of the post-war era and, oddest of all, the European Community whose relevance to anything the author is discussing is hard to fathom.

This just diminishes everything the book is trying to say, even where its less-than-conventional and 'non-PC' opinions might actually be justifiable, for example in the positive attitude the author takes to the China Wars which were about rather more than opium.

There is also something refreshingly robust in the author's account of the Maori Wars with the selfless British saving the Maoris from themselves. One suspects there is an alternative view! However, as the author's sources ignore most other books on any of his subjects, we have no such balanced discussion here.



A marked feature of the book is that the Maoris and almost every other race of regional native 'savages', as the author often unashamedly calls them, have their cannibalistic tendencies emphasised and more-than-fully described. The author clearly has something of a 'thing' about this.

Most curious perhaps, and the competition is serious, is the section on operations against the people trafficking known as 'blackbirding' – the transport of natives of Pacific islands against their will for work on plantations. Perhaps because his contemporary sources reflect local commercial interests, for once the usually heroic Royal Navy gets criticised for being heavy handed and an excess of zeal.

This is a really odd book. At times it is interesting and even absorbing. The writer's style is usually clear and fluid. But at other times it reads like a poor script for Alf Garnett or a popular national tabloid on a bad day. Its sheer self indulgence is quite extraordinary and a reflection of its publication by a small private press, Winter Productions, based in Derby, England and Wellington, New Zealand. One doubts if any larger house would have accepted it, certainly without major editing. In this respect it is an example of vanity publishing at its worst.

Those who still wish to engage with this strange book can get it off the internet by googling its title. It is a well-produced and substantial work of 518 pages and may well physically be worth the £30 asked (including postage), but if anyone wants to spend this for a book that is as much an expression of personal prejudice as serious history, you have been warned!

■ Available from Winter Productions, 48 Crompton Street, Derbey, DE1 1NX.

'All that a British sailor should be'



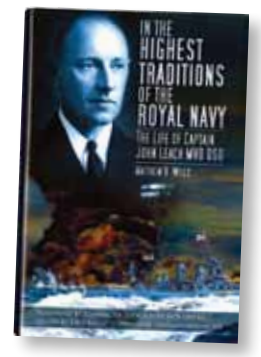
I WAS fortunate enough to interview Admiral of the Fleet Sir Henry Leach for my University of Exeter research project a couple of years ago, *writes Mike Farquharson-Roberts who, in retirement from the RN, is a PhD student in Naval History at Exeter University*.

He was in fine form and every bit as blunt and to-the-point as he was in his book *Endure no Makeshifts*; I was startled when he told me that he had been bored at Dartmouth and the only thing of value he had learned there was how to lie. Bored or not, he left with the 'Special Subjects' prize and went on to be a 'five-oner', getting five first class passes on sub-lieutenants' courses, and famously as First Sea Lord, he was to barge in on the Prime Minister in the House of Commons after Argentina invaded the Falkland Islands.

He obviously held his father, Capt John Leach in very high regard and the literally shadowy figure who stuck his head round a ten-year-old Henry's bedroom door to say "I take it you have no objections to joining the Navy?" comes alive in a book published in the week that Sir Henry died.

An ex-US army officer, Matthew B.Wills' biography **In the Highest Traditions of the Royal Navy: The Life of Captain John Leach MVO DSO** (*Spellmount*, £18.99 ISBN 978 0752459929) should rather be called 'The Life and Times of Captain John Leach' as it includes a lot of background as well as purely biographical material.

After covering an eventful career, fully half the book covers his last appointment as commanding officer of HMS Prince of Wales. He took an un-worked up brand new battleship to sea, with contractors men still aboard working on her main armament to pursue the Bismarck. He saw HMS Hood sunk while his own ship was hit seven times (one unexploded 15in shell was found only when she returned to port) and was himself wounded when the bridge was hit – only two others on the bridge survived – but crucially Prince of Wales hit the Bismarck causing a fuel leak that sealed her fate.



Capt Leach broke off the action after he lost a turret due to mechanical failure and was subsequently threatened with a court martial for his pains, fortunately not followed through.

Then he took Winston Churchill – he said Capt Leach was "all that a British sailor should be" – to the Placentia Bay conference with President Roosevelt following which the ship was sent to the Mediterranean for Operation Halberd, covering a Malta convoy before going to Singapore in company with HMS Repulse.

The author spends an entire chapter on the signals and human intelligence matters that he believes could have prevented the loss of the two ships to air attack when they attempted to prevent Japanese landings in Malaya, before dealing with the sinkings.

He concludes by bringing the family story full circle; as the Falklands War was getting under way a Labour MP warned the prime minister of the danger to the task force of air attack. She replied that she knew – after all one of her chief advisers was "Sir Henry Leach, the son of Captain Leach who went down on the Prince of Wales."



One Corps, two stories

WRITTEN in a positive, honest and straightforward style, Jake Olafsen's **Wearing the Green Beret** (*McClelland & Stewart*, £18.50 ISBN 978-0771068522) gives a very interesting view of the rough and demanding life in the Royal Marines in the 2000s.

It is chronological in its unfolding and the accurate dates given make it easy to link his personal story to the current events we hear about in the news, *writes Frederic Gay of the Royal Marines Historical Society*.

Moreover the author gives a few technical details of the weapons and equipments which are always welcome for a better understanding of what modern soldiering is all about.

Jake spent his youth in Canada (British Columbia), and served with the Canadian Army Reserves. Although keen, he was not retained on a Canadian Army course and was so disappointed with it that he looked elsewhere.

This is where he heard of the Royal Marines. The Corps took his application very seriously and he found himself in CTCRM, first for PRMC then for recruit training with 904 Tp in July 2005.

He experienced hell there – particularly at the hands of a vicious instructor – and his descriptions of what he endured are particularly poignant and edifying. He really went beyond the limits of human endurance and suffering.

In May 2006, after passing-out with 905 Tp he joined 45 Cdo and found himself in Afghanistan in September 2006. His description of the operation against Jugroom Fort (where unfortunately L/Cpl Matthew Ford was killed) is particularly interesting and gives an eyewitness account of what really happened on the ground and how the troops lived those terrible events. It perfectly complements what Ewen Southby-Tailyour beautifully described in his book *3 Commando Brigade, Helmand Afghanistan*.

Jake found himself again in Afghanistan at the end of 2007, this time with Mortar Troop of 40 Cdo. He had an eventful tour but fortunately came out unscathed and left the Corps in 2009.

His book is entertaining as well as historically very interesting. It fits perfectly in a time where the Royal Marines Museum is trying to save as many witness accounts of current events as possible. It is also motivating in a PR/recruiting perspective.

Stephen Wynn's **Two Sons in a War Zone** (*Clairview*, £10.99 ISBN 978-1905570249) offers a family's view of the war in Afghanistan.

The author is a police officer who has two children serving in the Forces: Luke, a Royal Marine, and Ross, a Para. Their father narrates his existence through his sons' lives, in particular their recent tours in Afghanistan – where both were wounded.

The reader lives with him, experiences his feelings, his anxiety over their well being, his worries when he receives no news, what he goes through when he hears the terrible news of another British military personnel killed in Afghanistan without knowing who it is and the heart-stopping moment when he hears a knock on the door and sees a man in uniform – immediately thinking something has happened to Luke only to realise...(I will not reveal what happens as it is one of those great enjoyable moments in the book).

Luke Wynn passed out of CTCRM in January 2008 and was drafted to Lima Coy 42 Cdo with whom he went through pre-deployment training before heading to Afghanistan from the end of 2008. He was shot on February 27 2009 and his tour ended here.

Luke was beside Sgt Noel Connolly when he rugby tackled a suicide bomber in November 2008 (Noel's action was relayed across the world – and the military world as well – I even heard of it in Switzerland, as it was really outstanding).

Luke was also present when L/Cpl Ben Whatley was killed on Christmas Eve 2008 (Ben was Luke's Section L/Cpl).

This book gives a great insight into a family going through the ups and downs of military life in a troubled time. It is written in a very sensitive and human style and the reader feels very close to them all along.

It is really worth reading.



Performances fit for a Queen

The Royal Navy showjumping and eventing team reaped the dividends of the development scheme which has been running for the past two years, fielding two strong teams at the Royal Windsor Horse Show.

Building on a firm foundation of horsemanship, the depth of talent for the squad now stands at ten personnel able to compete at Service level, *writes Lt Sharon Brown*.

Of those ten, six were selected to represent the RN at Royal Windsor, leaving four strong reserves to step into the breach if necessary – such is the fragility of mankind and equines alike.

Admiral Simon Charlier, Lt Beth Oldfield and Lt Steve Currie formed the first team with Lt Cdrs Vicki Sollitt (*pictured above on her mount, Prim and Proper*) and Suzanne Clark and Lt Richard Walker in the second.

Following an intensive 'tune-up' session at Quob Equestrian Centre, horses bathed and tack cleaned, the team loaded up to head off in convoy to the showground.

This was not without issue and with all horses loaded and engines running, Vicki Sollitt jumped into her lorry only to discover a flat battery. With loaded horses trying to make a bid for freedom and lorries angrily swaying from side to side, Lt Walker sprang into action with his jump leads, only to attach them backwards and nearly singe his eyebrows.

Lt Currie, hot on his colleague's heels, dived under the lorry to assist and with a few more sparks and much excitement the roar of the engine joined the chorus of diesels waiting to depart and the teams were cooking on gas!

Having safely arrived at Windsor and settled the horses in, the team sat down to a much-needed glass of wine and burger.

Alarm clock…….buzzzzz…. 0515 and the team were up. Course walk at 0630 and first competitor entered the ring at 0730.

Lt Walker, as rider No.1 from the port team, acquitted himself admirably with a superb round, just tipping a couple of poles.

Adm Charlier, starboard's rider No.1, laid down the gauntlet as the first military rider to go clear round the course.

Lt Cdr Clark had a rapid round with her speedy mount, closely followed by Lt Currie on his new mount, Bob.

Lt Cdr Sollitt, the last member of the port team, rode a beautiful round, but just tipped a couple of poles towards the end of the course, while Lt Oldfield followed suit on her impressive mount, Splash.

Despite the few penalties picked up by the two RN teams, the course proved a technical challenge for all and of the 30 military teams entered, after the first round the Navy were lying in seventh and tenth place overall – and the top 12 teams went forward to jump-off in front of the Queen.

Each team had to select a member to represent them in the final: Admiral Charlier and Lt Cdr Sollitt were selected.

Straight after the military parade, team representatives went into the main arena in reverse order to jump – and try to achieve the fewest penalties in the fastest time.

The port team, lying in tenth, were the first RN team to go forward; Lt Cdr Sollitt trotted in with purpose, came to a crisp halt, saluted the Queen and got down to business.

Riding with focus, determination and by the seat of her pants, she secured tenth place with a fast clear round which was wildly cheered by the crowd when she cleared the final fence.

Admiral Charlier also put in a storming performance and produced a round of no-less-than pure genius to move the starboard team up to sixth – putting them in contention for the Queen's plate, awarded to the highest non-mounted unit.

Tension rose as the final few teams took to the arena. The Navy did not improve their overall position, but did manage to take second place in the Queen's plate.

Due to an administrative error, the port team were pulled forward to receive the second prize won by the starboard team, leaving Admiral Charlier, Lt Oldfield and Lt Currie to watch on helplessly as the port team collected the prize on their behalf – cheers guys.

Overall a very memorable day with the Royal Navy represented at the highest level by team members who rode exceptionally well and made their captain very proud.

And away from Windsor, the Royal Navy and Royal Marines Riding Stables at Bickleigh Barracks and Bickleigh Saddle Club held their annual Pony Club awards.

The event also included the official opening of the recently-refurbished outdoor riding school.

The drainage and riding surface have been replaced, funded by grants from the Naval Services Amenities Fund and Devonport Welfare Fund.

The stables now have an all-weather riding surface with drainage that can cope with the worst downpours – allowing riding to continue no matter what the weather.

The event also included a dog show and hog roast, both of which proved to be hugely popular and a great success, raising much-needed revenue for the club.

The saddle club, now a UK Registered Charity (Charity No 1141412), and the riding stables are a non-profit making organisation dedicated to providing and promoting affordable equestrian activities for Service personnel and their families.

For more information contact 01752 727038 (93788 7038) or visit www.bickleighsaddleclub.info.



● *LH Nick Allen throws a high back roll during the RN-RM kitesurfing championships off Weymouth*

RM take kite crown

CRACKING wind and a beautiful hot June sun greeted competitors from across the Naval Service as they headed to Weymouth for the annual RN-RM **kitesurfing** contest.

Unfortunately, a good number of the association's members were otherwise occupied abroad (some close to the sea... and others not), but the turnout was still good.

New president, Deputy Commander-in-Chief Fleet, Vice Admiral George Zambellas, came down for his first taste of the sport, and at one point was seen being dragged through the deep water by a kite with just his ankles left in the wet stuff – all intentionally, of course – as he received expert instruction from a couple of in-house instructors.

With the scene set, the two teams of five riders took part in the knock-out heats.

The standard was high from the outset, and it was clear that people had not been shy in getting out during the cold winter months.

They had also made the most of the recent Club training camp in Egypt as back loops, kite loops, and unhooked moves all came to the fore – most being landed successfully, although there were a few impressive crashes.

After losing out to the dark blue last year, Royal allowed enthusiasm to reign supreme and just won the team event.

With some of the club's best dark blue riders out of action/away, Lt Col Tony Chattin RM managed to blag a jammy individual win – again probably more through enthusiasm than skill.

So it was a little through gritted teeth that Adm Zambellas gave the Royals their title.

The surfers were most ably assisted by a couple of our main supporting companies: King of Watersports, who donated prizes and organised plenty of demo kit, including F-One kites, Xtreme Academy for instructional and (crucially) barbecue support, and Flexifoil for throwing in a pro-rider to act as an impartial judge.

The RNRMKA is your in-Service kitesurfing club and has a family-friendly environment.

It is holding a number of beginner 'taster' weekends through the year at heavily discounted rates, and is organising the Inter-Services championships at Saunton in North Devon from October 28 to 30.

See www.kitenavy.com or contact Lt Cdr Bob Bowman, membership secretary, on 93781 7222/ bob.bowman283@mod.uk for more details.

Olympic dreams at Sultan

A YEAR early. And in Gosport. And without the big names.

Anyway, HMS Sultan hosted its version of London 2012 (apologies for the *very* tenuous Olympic link...) with a mini **Olympiad** on the South Coast.

Athletes from HMS Sultan, MWS Collingwood and the Defence Diving School competed for the title of the best training establishment, with the Gosport engineering academy coming out victorious.

The day was an excellent opportunity for all three establishments to showcase their athletic capability in front of the RN's coach Lt Cdr Gough.

A select group of successful personnel have now been chosen to represent their relevant establishments at the upcoming Portsmouth area championships.

There were two heats for each race, with the fastest time from both races winning overall.

Lt Bakewell was one of two female athletes who rose to the occasion winning the 400m, 1500m and LAET Haines took the javelin.

However the competitors of the day were LAET Hill (Sultan) and MA Franklin (Defence Diving School) who both won a number of races including the team track events.



With the success of this inaugural event, Sultan intends to host an annual athletics day.

It was, says the base's LPT Locky Lockton "a huge success for athletics in the Portsmouth area.

"All three establishment athletic coaches have now highlighted some talented athletes and amplified the chances of their teams having a successful Portsmouth area championships."



Just Gary's cup of tea

Continued from page 52

"The person who asked was in the OTC and his response was 'I didn't think the Senior Service would want to take part'.

"Well that was just a red rag to the bull! I signed up immediately and started my training later that day.

Gary – pictured above enjoying a nice cuppa during a brief 'pit stop' – continues: "My initial thought was how hard could it be? It's going to be relatively easy as long as I do plenty of training I will be fine.

"I can honestly say that it is the hardest thing that I have ever done in my life. There were many times when the thought of the distance was going to get the better of me – but the support that I was given throughout was so overwhelming I pushed through the barrier and was successful."

As well as being an immense physical challenge, the exertions of Gary and his fellow runners/ walkers – WO2 Carter, CSjt Roach and Sgt Corbett – has so far raised more than £1,300 for the veterans' charity Project 65 and SSAFA. They're still taking donations via www.justgiving.com/gary-maskell for Project 65 or www.ssafa.org.uk/donating for SSAFA.

Free tickets to Olympics

SAILORS and Royal Marines should apply now if they wish to watch the greatest sporting event of our generation: the 2012 Olympics.

Ten thousand tickets for next year's games have been set aside for the Armed Forces thanks to Tickets for Troops and the London 2012 Ticketshare scheme.

To launch the initiative, 50 personnel from across the Services were invited to the Olympic Park in north-east London where gold medallists Lord Coe and Baroness Tanni Grey-Thompson were on hand.

As well as the 10,000 tickets allocated to Tickets for Troops, the London 2012 Ticketshare scheme will see 125,000 tickets donated to London schoolchildren, a further 50,000 will be distributed to schools across the UK and the British Olympic Association, British Paralympic Association and Sport England will receive 5,000 tickets apiece. The tickets are funded through a levy placed on hospitality packages for the 2012 games.

"I'm absolutely delighted that through our Ticketshare scheme we will be involving members of the Armed Services and their families," said Lord Coe.

"Through the sale of our prestige tickets we are enabling the donation of tickets to a number of deserving causes – it would be unimaginable that we wouldn't include our armed service personnel. I would urge those who are eligible to get on the Tickets for Troops website to register their details."

Tickets For Troops was set up in 2009 to provide members of the Armed Forces with free tickets for major sporting, entertainment, musical and cultural events. Since launching it has been donated over 250,000 tickets and over 90,000 personnel have registered on the organisation's website, www.ticketsfortroops.org.uk.

Servicemen and women wishing to attend the Olympics should make their applications by November 1.

SPORT

Power to the lifters

THREE RN **powerlifters** attended the European championships with Sam Dew winning the 75kg class, claiming the European bench press and world total records in the process.

Nick Rakowski won the junior 110kg class and Jim Cox came sixth in the 100kg category.

Unfortunately reigning 75kg world champion Mark Fleming was unable to attend due to operational commitments.

Those excellent results were followed by news that powerlifting has now become one of the RN's 'approved sports'.

This status will help the members receive more support from the Navy, both at grass roots and elite levels.

This is certainly an important step in recognising the importance of powerlifting within the RN and ties in well with moves within the PT branch towards functional training.

Finally, the highlight of the RNPA year: the full power and single lift championships at Temeraire.

The Temeraire PT department supplied a late entry, Nicola Connolly, who went on to win the under 67.5kg weight category and best female lifter.

The captain of the HMS Trenchant team, Wesley McGuiness, won the 82.5kg class and was the best lifter of the day, finishing with a 2.5x bodyweight deadlift.

HMS Trenchant, with excellent performances from the other two members of its three-man team, took the team trophy.

An enjoyable day was had by all, with some new faces arriving and experienced veterans returning for another day of competitive, but supportive lifting

Newcomers received a brief introduction to the sport from the more experienced competitors, with powerlifter and strongman John Strange demonstrating the correct technique.

Numerous RN and Combined Service events are being organised around the country for the rest of 2011.

If you lift weights in a gym or just want to test your strength then look up the RNPA – new lifters are always welcome and there is no membership fee.

Search for Royal Navy Powerlifting Association on Facebook, visit www.royalnavypowerlifting.co.uk or drop secretary Nick Rakowski an email (nickkowski@yahoo.co.uk).

Engineers in the swing

TRETHORNE **Golf** Club in Launceston will be the venue for the 2011 RN engineers championships.

The day's play will take the format of a medal full handicap in the morning followed by a stableford ¾ handicap in the afternoon.

Serving members of the WE/AE/ME and MT branches, plus RFA engineers, ex-RN engineers and past champions are all eligible to attend the September 12 event.

Closing date for entries is July 23. Details at www.engineersopen.net or see RNTM 068-11. Alternatively speak to tournament director Lt Paul Holvey 9375 65509 or WO1(ETWE) Taff Reha (9380 26113).



Higher, faster, wetter

POWERING through the HMS Raleigh pool, Musn Kaitlan O'Malley's butterfly strokes help the Torpoint establishment's ladies to victory in the RN's Western Area Swimming Championships.

Forty swimmers from BRNC, Culdrose, Plymouth Naval Base and Yeovilton converged on Raleigh for a mix of individual and team events.

Culdrose took the overall honours, amassing 172 points thanks to their day in the pool, Raleigh took second spot, 12 points behind – thanks in part to a number of race wins from Musn O'Malley (*pictured above by Dave Sherfield of HMS Raleigh*).

Meanwhile at RM Stonehouse...

Despite the absence of the Brigade on operational duties in Helmand, the Corps decided to press ahead with the annual Royal Marines' swimming, water polo and diving competition.

RM Poole and the staff from COMUKAMPHIBFOR fought out the final of the water polo contest.

With more experience at rugby than the gentle art of water polo 'fought' is an appropriate term. An exciting, flowing and at times comical match, RM Poole had the greater skill with CAF showing far more commitment, although we suspect the referee would use the term 'dubious tactics'.

Making use of the EUNAVFOR international HQ, CAF managed to field an all-star multinational squad including a Croatian international synchronised swimmer (read on).

There was some excellent goal keeping from both sides, more often in the shallow end, but at the end of the first half RM Poole took the lead thanks to Mne Steer's opening goal.

During the second period, CAF fought back and equalised thanks to Capt Gloak (on loan from Northwood); they would have gone on to win if the new RM Swimming Association Secretary refereeing the match had not disallowed two goals from the association's president (a senior lieutenant colonel).

After a short rest the game resumed, with a do-or-die first goal to settle the contest.

It was a brilliant game for the spectator with Poole's Mne Jackson bagging the winning goal.

The diving competition consisted of three dives – two from the one-metre springboard, one from the three-metre high board (there would have been two leaps from the three-metre board... but health and safety intervened and refused to let the competitors go again).

There were 11 entries altogether: three from RM Poole, six from COMUKAMPHIBFOR and two from CTCRM; there would have been just the one but a certain PTI spotted Capt Gvozdencevic, CAF's Croatian international synchronised lady diver and her spray-on, X-rated swimming suit and decided he wanted a bit of that (the diving you understand...)

Diving standards ranged from good to OK, kamikaze, to the downright frightening.

Glad to say no backs broken, but again like the water polo most entertaining.

In third place was Cpl Steve Elliott CTCRM with 21 points; second place went to Capt Gvozdencevic (known throughout the competition as 'the Croatian Lady' as Royal could not pronounce her name...) 22 points and most of those for style rather than the dives, and the winner PTI Sgt Richie Harley of CTCRM with 22½ points.

As for the swimming, there was a good turn-out with more than 30 competitors.

There were many highlights such as a demonstration of a racing backstroke turn utilising the head only and the women's relay team beating COMUKAMPHIBFOR, only to be disqualified.

Special mention must go to Recruit Pike who was volunteered to take part with almost no notice or training and swam the 100m in 58.43s, just outside the Corps record held by an England Commonwealth Games-standard swimmer; an excellent time.

Congratulations to CTCRM who pipped Poole to the overall title.

Individual results:
800m and 400m freestyle: Lt Col A Price RM (COMUKAMPHIBFOR)
200m backstroke and 100m butterfly: WO 2 N Vaughan RM (RM Poole)
100m breaststroke: Mne Hughes (CTCRM)
4 x 2 individual medley: Mne R Hall (RM Poole)
100m and 66m freestyle: Rct Pike (CTCRM)
100m backstroke: Rct McKenny (CTCRM)
200m breaststroke: Sgt Steer (RM Poole)
200m freestyle: Lt Cdr Allsop (RM Poole)
4 x 2 medley relay: CTCRM
6 x 2 freestyle relay: CTCRM

The next Corps swimming championships will take place in Jan 2012 to be able to select a strong team to tour the USA as part of the proposed Corps/USMC sports tour in April.

Budding swimmers should contact Chris Fairey, the Corps' Coach, on 9375 36402/01752 836402/ RM STONEHOUSE-Mess Silverman.

And finally in the pool, HMS Heron's Swim Club has achieved Swim 21 accreditation – a quality mark from the Amateur Swimming Association, recognising the safe environment and encouragement provided by the Yeovilton club.

Heron was set up to give children aged 4½ and above of Service, former Service and MOD personnel at the Somerset air station the chance to learn to swim, receive training and ultimately an introduction to competitive swimming; the result now is a thriving team which is competing – and winning – at local galas.

As well as being a seal of approval, the Swim 21 Club accreditation allows Heron to tap into the ASA's resources.



Nice swan, Cyril

LAST month we brought you a sporting camel...

... this month a swan. Cyril the Swan to be precise, posing here with PO Kev Bridgland (845 NAS) and CPO Justin Blackford (Mobile Air Operations Team) at Wembley Stadium (Cyril's the one with the long neck and feathers...).

The two senior rates, plus comrades from the Commando Helicopter Force at Yeovilton in Somerset, were invited to watch the last match of the **Football** League season: the Championship play-off between Swansea City (Cyril's their mascot) and Reading.

"I've always wanted to see Wembley and for Swansea to be here is outstanding. It's an honour to be hosted by the Football League; this really is a day to remember," said CPO Blackford.

He left Britain's most famous sporting stadium chuffed as the Welsh team triumphed 4-2 to reach the promised land of the Premiership.

With much of CHF on operations in Afghanistan or embarked in HMS Ocean and HMS Albion in the Mediterranean and east of Suez, the day out amongst the Wembley crowds was a thrilling occasion and a most welcome break.

"The crowd were so welcoming," said AET James Lockwood (847 NAS), from Swansea.

"I couldn't believe how many Swansea City and Reading supporters cheered us when we walked around the pitch."

As well as being treated (almost) like royalty for the day, there was a chance to see behind the scenes, including the commentary box, where England legend Kevin Keegan was providing expert analysis for a national radio station. He broke off from commentating duties to pose for photos with the CHF team.

Talent rein in the rain

TALENT by name – and by nature when it comes to long-distance **running**.

A dozen-strong team from the Plymouth-based submarine headed to a very wet Lake District for the punishing Keswick-Barrow 40-mile race.

The deeps hoped merely to cross the finish line but instead returned to Devon with the W Richardson Trophy for the best performance by a team from the Armed Forces/MOD civil service.

Talent is the first submarine to win the title since it was first awarded in 1976.

The deeps outpaced 17 teams from the Army, HMS Sultan and HMS Vanguard among others.

The race traces its history to the mid-1960s and a statement by President John F Kennedy who said every American should be capable of walking 50 miles a day.

At the time the first Polaris submarine, HMS Resolution, was being built at Barrow and several American and Vickers workers organised a walk to foster relationships.

The challenge was set and the commanding officer of HMS Resolution formed a team and the first walk from Keswick to Barrow (approx 50 miles). Today the route is about 40 miles and includes runners as well as those who prefer a more leisurely pace.

'Team Talent' started at 5.30am for a racing start in Keswick.

With dark, wet conditions things didn't bode well for the day ahead but with 'hopeless' optimism all-round (and a promise to see the support drivers of WO Sean O'Kane and CPO 'Ski' Ostrawsky, at the first stop in seven miles), the team set off into horizontal Lakeland rain.

They quickly spread out along the route with CO Cdr Simon Asquith and XO Lt Cdr Ian Surgey ensuring the slower members were fit as the younger faster members raced away.

Lt Cdr John Rider was the first team member to finish in a very respectable 17th place after 5hrs 50mins.

While the runners excelled, the scoring system meant that, for those teams with a 100 per cent finishing record, it was only the last-man-home time that counted.

With all the team home and no retirements there was a tense wait to see if Lt Cdr Surgey's 51st place – a very respectable time of 11hrs 54mins – would be enough to take the silverware.

Only three minutes separated HMS Talent from the second-placed military team.

"It was a gruelling but fantastic event to be part of and I am very proud of the way the team performed on the day. To be the first submarine to ever win this trophy was a real bonus," said Cdr Asquith.

Just Gary's cup of tea

FORTY miles? Pah. CPO(CS) Gary 'Dan' Maskell (Oxford URNU) laughs at such distances.

The senior rating completed five marathons in five days – that's 132½ miles, retracing a route taken by the men of 6th Airborne Division on a legendary training march from Devon to Wiltshire in 1942.

That event is re-enacted annually as the Forces March one of the UK's toughest challenges, created to unite civilians with personnel from the military and emergency services to raise vital funds for the care and support of UK Armed Forces heroes and military families.

Running and walking, participants are expected to get to Bulford in Wiltshire from Ilfracombe in north Devon in five days, covering at least 26.2 miles daily.

"When I was first asked if I wanted to take up the challenge my reply was a negative one," said Gary.

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